THE POETRY REVIEW

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OBITUARY

With profound regret we record the death of
Field Marshal the EARL WAVELL
P.C., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., C.M.G., M.C.

A Vice-President of The Poetry Society, July 20, 1943.
President of The Poetry Society, 1945-1947.

★

LOST SONGS

RACHEL ANNAND TAYLOR

Where are the songs the Sirens sang?
  In Crete and Rhodes now where are those
Sweet swallow-songs that dipt their wings
  Over the pomegranate and rose?
Where are the absolute proud songs,
  As lost as fallen flakes of fire,
Of bridal, dirge, and wounded gods,
  Shaken from Sappho's sovran lyre?
Where are the songs of Abelard,
  Exalting lovely Heloïse?
Defying God, inciting man,
  They lilted down the Paris quays.
And where are Leonardo's songs,
  Wed with his lute of silver string
When by green Arno in rose-red
  He walked like Love at evening.
Where are the strange heart-breaking songs
  That perished, and no listener knew,
Like the lament of wild white swans
  Adrift down dawn's unearthly blue?

When from a sunset oversea
  A soft low wind awaking sighs,
Then the lost music of the world
  Edges the trembling air, and cries.
Let not a suprasensual ear
  Divine one rarified echo, lest
The soul go crazed for evermore,—
  Pierced through with beauty, find no rest.

THE WILD SWAN

WILFRID GIBSON

As the wild day was dying
Out of the rain that shrouded
The stormy Summer sea

On foam-white flashing pinions
A whooper-swan came flying;
And to my old mind, clouded
With brooding misery,
It seemed for one brief instant
That your young restless spirit
Returned at last to me.

But, even as my spirit
Enraptured soared to greet you,
A baffling squall of rain
Swept inland from the ocean,
And those white glancing pinions
Whose lightning-flash had kindled
The dusk of my bereavement
Vanished in storm again.

DEER-FLOCKS

WILFRID THORLEY

Deer-flocks on silent feet
  Over the hills move on,
With soft eyes full of dread
  And all dismay.

Men from the city come
  Raiding their sacred haunt,
With lightning held in hand
  And evil heart.

Meekly their mute eyes shed
  Shame on the men that slay,
With gaze that spells out doom
  For grace destroyed.

They in their grace forgive
  Wry purpose so unkind.
Nimbly they move and flout
  What fate ordains.

Till in the glen they spy
  Foemen in convoy near
When like a cloud they fade
  In swift stampede.

Then comes the wind's rebuke
  Louder than galloping feet,
Louder than they can guess
  Whom herds deride.

THE ELIXIR

R. H. MOTTRAM

"How queer to die!" she said. And all the sages
Probing that question, said they ever more?
Nor garnered they in all their learned pages
Half so much wisdom as her simple lore.

But will she die? I doubt it. What redeeming
Could be so lasting as the love she gave?
Through darkling Future bright I see it gleaming,
Farther than Time, and deeper than the Grave.

"How queer to die!" she said. Her lips were smiling.
She knows she will not. Far too strong her hold
On life through childrens' children, thus beguiling
Death with the art of never growing old.

THE FIGURE ON THE SHORE

FRANCES CORNFORD

You must not turn away
  From my sterility,
Brave sea-gulls! You must stay,
You must not turn away
Like hopes and leave this gray,
  This void uncaring sea.
You must not sweep away
  From our sterility.

FIRE SHAPES

WILLIAM KEAN SEYMOUR

What pictures in the fire I see!
The coil of lambent flames
Expands in compass momently,
Elaborating themes

Which as I trace them break in ash
Shredding in silver grey,
As birches in November flash
With light at fall of day.

This oak log, hulled with bark, its bleached
Sawn surface in a molten flow,
Lies like a torn leviathan beached,
Waiting the tempest's blow.

And see this boisterous cavalier,
Whose eyebrows curl to break
In sudden dissolution sheer,
Losing his wide-awake;

While cubed in flame the Dolomites
Rear to a saffron sky,
With peaks that glow like rosy teats
To suckle Gemini;

And sinister and crapulous,
A spitting face with purple veins,
Lurks all that evil ever was,
Crouched on a pile of bones!

Caverns and falls and bannered aisles
Condense in flux of fire,
While saurians with candent scales
Writhe on their funeral pyre.

Had I a touch of Greco's art
Swift from the fire I'd wrest
These shapes that mingle and dispart
In such Promethean jest;

But to the storehouse of my dreams
They'll file, and I shall say:
I had these pictures, forms and themes
And they are laid away.

ABDICATION

G. ROSTREVOR HAMILTON

Greatness is gone. Be this our only care,
With little rule, less syntax and no rhyme,
To mirror dissolution and despair:
We must reflect our time.

HANDS THAT PRAY

P. D. CUMMINS

Palm to palm, the withered hands,
Through each finger-crack the sands
Grain by sterile grain outgoing,
Pray for living waters flowing.

Pray for us,
St. Michael and All Angels, pray for us,
Stamp on the dragon with its scabbed, dry scales;
Allay for us,
St. Ronan and All Angels, allay for us
Our thirst at your cool well that never fails.
Stay from us,
Our Lady and All Angels, stay from us
The cloud of dust encroaching on the sun;
Flay from us,
Jesu and All Angels, flay from us
The bitter bark that the sweet sap may run.

Hands entreaty-pressed, unlock:
Scratch and scrabble at the rock,
In the burning wasteland toil,
Dig in the unseeded soil,
Pile the earth that crumbles, raise

Mountain-high the drift of days.
Far below their cumbering
Lies the lost, the longed-for spring.

Too far below,
Too far beyond, too far
Above, the living waters are.
We yet beseech,
Who can no further go,
Who can no further reach:

Flow into us, rush into every vein,
Swell the shrunk heart and flood the arid brain,
Gush round the root of thought that there may spread
The branching tree of heaven in the head,
Whose stem is crystal and whose leaves are fire,
Whose clustered blossoms are a starry quire.

Flow into us grown dry as tinder,
Whose heavy, reckoned minutes hinder
The bud from forming, the sap from rising,
The seed from stirring at Spring's surmising.
Flow in and waken us from the seeming
Enduring sculpture of winter dreaming.

Flow into us. We cry in the enchanted
And silent world that is our deathly dream
Whose flattened image fills the frozen stream.
The rains that silver-slanted
Are turned to endless chains of ice that gleam
Padlocked about the structure of poor bone,
The is, the was, the will not be.
Flow into us, flow in—but we,
We, the alone to the alone
Cry, and from the burdened sky
A single flake floats down to lie
More harshly on us than a cliff of stone.

In sleep we petrify; in our awaking
We agonise in drought beyond our slaking.
Plead for us, archangels; saints, intercede for us,
Break that which we made, renew us in unmaking.

Pray for us.

Press the febrile hands together,
Strain at the limits of the tether,
Round and round in the circle going,
Always away from the water flowing,
Leaping, cascading, to brim the thirsting
Who, choked with dust till their lungs are bursting,
Spin like tops as they seek its sources
In craggy deserts and silted courses.

THE HARE

STANLEY SNAITH

The long scythe biting through the grain
Whispers to her pricking ear
That the Unthinkable draws near,
That the Without is trampling in,
A deathly excess of light and space
Challenging like a forest blaze
The sentient compound of her fear.
Her laws and necessities denied,
Existence a diminishing shade,
She waits the reaping blow. And we
In gentle instinctive sympathy
Drink the danger at her side,
As though foresuffering the hour
When we too abdicate our pride
Before the unassuagable blade,
And sue the pitiless for pity,
Declare our love an open city,
And run into our lives and hide.

THE GARDEN

WRENNE JARMAN

The garden of my dreams is sere,
Forlorn and rankly overgrown;
The seeds of some forgotten year

Blow over it as plague is blown,—
Not winter-bare, but a remote
Midsummer lushness some foul breath
Or curse or sudden lightning smote,
And turned to yellowness and death.

As, stumbling and afraid, I tread
Before its broken colonnade,
I come on fallen fountains spread,
And summerhouses long decayed;
And glimpse the rotten lids of wells
That hellebore or hemlock smothers,
In shrubberies where crazy girls
Once slew and hid their little brothers.

Delaying by its ivied gate
To breathe the sweet and sickly air,
I wonder if their phantoms wait,
But only echo answers there ...
So Heaven's gate, as in my dream,
Will have a rusted lock and key,
And close outside it I shall scream,
And none, and none will answer me.

PORTRAIT OF AN ELDERLY POET

PHILIP HENDERSON

For receiving a particular kind of guest at tea
I am bothered all the morning.
I am wondering what to say to him when he comes.
Above all, I am anxious to be myself,
Yet not to hurt him by being too much myself.

There is fifty years difference between us, my guest and I,
Yet he is offended if I treat him as an old man.
He is also offended if I do not pay him proper respect,
Being an elderly poet, whose poems no one remembers.

I think he detects some falsity in my attitude.
I am, perhaps, too humble before the venerable reputation,
The clipped white beard, the gold-rimmed monocle, the trembling
hands—

The hands that shake so pitiably when he takes his tea,
Though it is not for me to notice. The old poet
With his taste for Wagner, the Icelandic sagas and the Arthurian
legends
Would be deeply hurt by pity of any kind.
Once, when I helped him on with his overcoat,
He shook me off and said: "At least I am still able to put on my coat!"

His prime was in the Nineties, when he lived in Chelsea,
And 'all the men who mattered' came to his studio—
Willie Yeats, Lionel Johnson, William Sharp, Uncle George Russell
and all.
There he wrote those poems about Tristram and the Holy Grail,
Dining off a hambone and a barrel of cider.

Now he is accustomed to the hollow graciousness of receptions,
And younger people who are silent till he has made his joke.

DEAD DAYS

DOUGLAS GIBSON

On dead days such as this when precious time
Is squandered in the need to earn a living,
When not a bud of beauty or of rhyme
Flowers in my heart, how fiercely I resent
The unreturning days, the endless giving
Of energy and mind to pay the rent,
The getting and the spending and the striving
That yield no harvest but this discontent.

Some days, it seems, the two can go together
And I can earn my wages and still sing
With words as magical as April weather
And rainbow-textured as a starling's feather
To flower as almond blossom in the Spring.

But on this doomed and January day
I am as hollow as a beech-nut husk,
Unsinging as this sky, as empty, grey;
And coming homewards through the silent dusk
I wish the wind that takes this last sad leaf
Would strike me into song, or sweep away
This lack of life in tides of joy or grief.

NORTH SEA

D. G. BRIDSON

Under the gleaming of the Bear,
Below the pointing Polar Star,
The latches of the dark lift up
And leave the doors of day ajar.

The hearth of the horizon cools:
Like embers of a dying fire
The ritualistic Northern Lights
Must douse their streamers and retire.

The wind that had us in its teeth
All night will slacken with the tide.
A sudden dazzle is in the air
That kicks the doors of daylight wide.

The white sea-horses gallop out
Where green sea-pastures rise and fall.
The sun rears up refulgently
And pours full morning over all.

And furtively from hidden shores,
Trailing their smoke along the verge
Like fingermarks upon the paint,
The grimy little ships emerge.

SERGEANT-PILOT

PHILIP JOHN STEAD

Laying aside your dreams of steel and stone
And planned bold skylines of the decades hence,
Yet with the old precision and desire,
You gave yourself to our new world's defence.

The great plane droning through the skies
Bore your new skill upon its enterprize,
And, on our purposes, you broke the blow

Aimed at our heart, upon your own, and died.
Perhaps you do not know:
Nor know my love and pride.

At sunset above the cathedral I see the squadron move
With the purpose of death that is also the purpose of love,
Stone beauty and aluminium will,
Both built of the need and purpose that actuate us still.

I know the greatness and the need.
And I know the filthy greed
Of Death for those, the wisest and the best,
Within whose hearts there burns the spirit of the West,
Which I, God knows, salute.

But when I felt you give
Your hand that last time to my hand to shake
I cursed the greatness and the need
And that bright spirit of the West
That made the hearts of those who loved you break,
And set those fierce wings on your breast.

SINGAPORE AFTERNOON

HERBERT CORBY

The air hangs like transparent sleep between
  Senses and sun: the hard emphatic trees
Poised in escalades of shine and green
  Blur as you sun your cooler memories.

Sleeping you dream always of dreams and sleep
  And never wonder if you'll wake again
To know that hauntings of old passions creep
  Like shadows to the shadow of your brain.

Time is the slip of shadows on the wall
  As, drowned in heat, the hearing halts and dies:
On loitering heaven the yellow lizards crawl
  The hours across their plaster paradise.

Embalmed in day the static feelings know
That they will freeze to motion and the fire
Dull when the breezes from the islands blow:
And night will cool the blood into desire.

FIRST PARTING

JAMES KIRKUP

I did not know that you had gone
until the moment turned away
with you, and left me wandering alone
among the winter trees of a familiar square
where we had walked together, gay
and confident in love's informal care.

But then each moment seemed to fill
with your departure, and my heart
struck dumb blows at my body's wall.
My stumbling feet kicked at the sodden leaves
that in the lonely autumn fought
with the sad wind blowing my broken loves.

What foolish sickness filled my eyes,
though you were gone for such brief parting!
The memory of other times like this
made wounds re-open on the grieving past,
and though I knew it was some other hurting,
I felt that first farewell as if it were our last.

LOVERS IN AUTUMN

GEORGE MOOR

Clear frost, and the strangled sob
Of a vixen afar.
Rounded hills through the dark.
Not a cloud, not a star.
Only cold, as the vixen cries
From the quarry above,
And their hearts cry with her, half-sob,
Half exultant love.

SONG

ELIZABETH JENNINGS

Come live with me and be my love;
The sharp night cuts our lives in half.
The moon surveys us, shadows move
Across the sheets and we must live
In the half-light or dark of self.

Come live with me and be my life
A moment. If we sleep apart
There will be distances to strive
Against and walls to screen the heart.
Lie down, lie down, if we are still
Night will forget us, all be well.

Come live with me and be my death,
Your shadow tossed above my eyes,
Your limbs my anguished bones beneath,
Our dreams an interrupted peace.
Be weathercock to every breath,
My winds receive, warm north and south
Shuddering from my frozen mouth.

THE YOUNG PRETENDER

ARTHUR CADDICK

The Young Pretender is the test of age.
He swings through history to the skirl of pipes,
Elusive and faint and lamenting,
With a motley troop of adolescents,
Dying by proxy for a deathless cause,
Falling around his fatal tartan kilt.

Who has not been a rebel in the night
Marching to tryst with half-a-hundred septs,
Watching the mists, round hidden hill-tops swirling,
For that gay exile, come back home again,
To signal battle in the rising sun,

While all the day proclaimed new majesty?
What eager boy has never stabbed his dirk
In all the grown-up world of fat complacence
Identified with George and pudding-time,
And heavy, dreary Hanoverian courts
Grunting King's English in a German growl?
We all hide claymores in our sixth-form desks,
And sing sad lilts in voices yet unbroken.

Then, as we grow, the finery wears thin.
A sentimental sigh, perhaps a glass
Moved in half-joke 'cross water in another
In old and dead and futile ritual:
Maybe a whisper in a woman's ear
That we are Jacobites through kinship's claim,
A touch of snob appeal in martyred kings,
And blood dipped blue in Highland pedigree.

When youth departs, the Young Pretender falls.
We look at facts not dreams—I do not say
That this is fair exchange, I say it's so—
We have odd doubts on Scotland's misery,
And burnt-out homes, and all the clans bled white,
And France engaged in chequered trafficking.
Could you have smelt the heather for brandy? . . .
And how could Stuart betoken liberty? . . .
Better to thank, with disillusioned grace,
Those Englishmen who saved a German king
To keep him in a parliamentary cage.

This is the Young Pretender's destiny—
To raise recurrently in youthful hearts
The flaming banners of authentic fire,
To be a dream, a talisman of hope,
The tocsin for our wild rebellions.
Then he takes flight, a mirage bravely fading,
As we, confirmed in calm prosaic ways,
No longer look for splendour through the mists.

LYRIC FOR MUSIC

GEOFFREY PARSONS

Across the meadows church bells were ringing
The river was flowing to the sea
The cows chewed the cud and the thrushes were singing—
I sat with my love beneath the Judas tree.

His words were fond and his ways were winning
He swore he would ever be true to me
The grass was sweet and spring was beginning—
I lay with my love beneath the Judas tree.

Summer came and summer went
The leaves turned brown and fell
But where my love the summer spent
My sad heart cannot tell.

Across the meadows church bells are ringing
The river flows coldly to the sea
No cows in the pasture, no thrushes are singing—
I wait for my love beneath the Judas tree.

POEM IN HOSPITAL

DORIAN COOKE

I should like to hear
Hammers of night rain
Bending the hot walls,
Louder than this near
Knocking of dry pain
Like fiery waterfalls.

I listen at night
To the long, loud twanging
Of nerves,—a thousand strings
Visible, stretched tight
And white, rows of banging
Hammers with sharp springs.

I should like to see
Stars smashed, one by one,
In a damp, far sky:
Or see a strong tree
Crash heavily down;
Or watch loud lions die.

Cold hands touch and fade.
Soft faces wave and stare
Wilder than blown grass,
Their outlines fogged and frayed
In the bubbled air
Like breath on a glass.

I should like to know
Of others' pain, who
In these beds keep watch
Upon their wounds. So
May we share the too
Slow hours that creep and scratch.

LONDON NOCTURNE (III)

RANDALL SWINGLER

My high window catches the chinese trees
Against the meadows of the maize-coloured sky;
An evening painted on a plate. For now

Beauty has become mythical, and these
Floods of asphodel which, in mythology,
Flowered the heavenly meadows, only grow

Out of the sinking and uncaring mind.
And the child's footfall which we know
Is irrecoverable, leaves its dent of shame

There, because still deluded and resigned
The passive mirror-depth will show
The innocent idiot face always the same.

THE FOOD OF IMAGINATION

BY LORD DUNSANY

How the facets of the mind reflect things seen I cannot say, but I am sure that imagination, for all its power, its brilliance and even its unearthly glory, needs food as do all living creatures; and its food, like theirs, comes all from Mother Earth. However wild the flight, however etherial, the thing described by a poet is some scene that he has known, which has sunk down into his mind, probably so deep as to have been forgotten, for poetry comes from the deeps; yet it is still there, though transmuted, as carbon is transmuted by the weight of the mountains into a diamond, and one day the poet finds it, as a miner comes on a diamond by chance. So sure is it that the soil of Earth is the food of imagination that with all poets except Shakespear one can get some indication of what they have been seeing and doing from lines they have written, whether they are describing Fairyland or Xanadu, or even, as in Milton's case, Hell. I say *except Shakespear* because his imagination was so voracious that it swallowed up more scenes for its food than what we are able to trace.

To analyze a well-known poem as an example I will take Tennyson's *Crossing The Bar*. It starts with sheer chunks of Earth:

> Sunset and Evening Star
> And one clear call for me.

Then he turns to thought and to description of the sea as he had known it: but it is a quite conscious description, not something welling up out of the deeps of memory, or out of something profounder even than that, surprising even the poet. It is those three things in the first two lines that seem to have come right into the poem of themselves, whereas it was the intellect that was required for the next six lines. And again, in the ninth line of the poem come those bright pieces of Earth:

> Twilight and evening bell.

And then intellect again.

It is a long time since I first read that poem; in fact I first read it the week that Tennyson died; but I felt sure at the time, as I have ever since, that Tennyson wrote that poem, or first thought of it, at evening near the sea, and that somebody called to him at that time and place. I used to think that it would probably have been his wife who called, but recently

seeing his biography by his grandson, and reading about Palgrave, a friend of the poet, who when they were together in the Isle of Wight irritated him by never letting him out of his sight and continually calling to him for fear that he might fall over a cliff, so that the poet could never be alone with his thoughts, I got the idea that it might have been Palgrave who called. But, whatever it was, that poem begins with three things that did not have to be invented, three pieces of Earth, the mystical significance of the call being supplied by the intellect. Though Tennyson was fully capable of making a poem as beautiful as that, he would not have done so, had not the raw material been almost thrown at him. But why the bar? And why did it moan? That I think needs some explaining, especially as it is the central part of the whole poem. There are of course bars at the mouths of some rivers, made by the sand that they carry down, but by no means all rivers have bars, nor do all journeys by sea start from mouths of rivers. I think that the reason of all this talk about the bar is that the younger poets must have grown up profoundly impressed by what was mysterious and romantic in the sad story of Elizabeth Barrett, whose brother was drowned in a boating accident caused by his boat being overturned at the bar of some small river on the coast of Devon, and who for long after was unable to sleep at night because she thought she could hear the bar moaning, and it sounded like voices. Tennyson was of course younger than Miss Barrett, and the sorrows of a lady poet may well have appeared romantic to him, as they certainly did to Browning, another younger poet, who married her. So there you have a river-bar romantic and rather fatal; and when twilight, the Evening star, a church bell, and Tennyson's name called clearly are thrown down by Mother Earth in a heap at his feet the poem is half written, and Tennyson's intellect could easily do the rest.

OBITUARY

VIVIAN LOCKE-ELLIS

1878-1950

Translator of *The Iliad* (Book I) and *Agamemnon*
Poet of *An Elegy, Five Lyrical Poems, The Revolt of Woman, The Venturers* and *Collected Lyrical Poems*
Contributor to *The Poetry Review*

THE POETRY OF SIDNEY KEYES

BY G. S. FRASER

I

The world of Sidney Keyes is one in which a frigidly detached augur interprets the most inauspicious omens. Three days before he was killed, he wrote from Tunisia with unfeeling self-assurance. "The only way back seems to be through armed Europe. I am not in much of a hurry, but I will get back *some time* if it's humanly possible; and I've never yet failed to do anything I set out to do . . . " We are put off by such a tone. Surviving a war is seen as a test of skill, like finishing a poem; "armed Europe" is peevishly diminished to the scale of a personal obstacle; surely this is to tempt the gods. Yet Keyes had written, a month before, to the same friend with mournful premonition: "Last night, I had the most strange and unlucky dream. I dreamt that *we* were being married and saw the actual ceremony. This is said to be one of the most unlucky kinds of dream one can have." His coldness helped him to constrict his will against the dreadful impact of such images . . .

His personality does seem, with all sorts of fires banked up underneath, to have been superficially a very cold one. It must have been almost unnerving to meet a young man so extremely successful and yet with such a just estimate of his own qualities. Keyes was neither modest nor conceited. "I am thankful," he writes, in the notes that are collected, with letters, plays, and stories, in *Minos of Crete,* "that my intellect is not strong enough to master my passions, nor my passions my intellect; for this is the true condition of creation. I am thankful that I can see myself as funny and ineffective, but not my powers." The price that he paid, however, for this useful estrangement from himself was a sense of a similar remoteness in others and in the world. He writes of telephoning a friend: "The personality is lost somewhere in the wire, as one's words are filtered through miles and miles of metal. And there is never enough time. It is less intimate than a letter. There was no contact between us at all . . . " Contact was difficult for him, even when one could not blame the telephone. "I lay down under a thorn tree . . . and decided I had done a good number of things for one so young, and that it was all worth while except for the sex part." He was afraid of sex, because he was afraid of possessiveness. The world must be conquered by acceptance; whether to a lover or a gun, "the body exists to be given, not owned." Yet acceptance of life (which he saw as the attitude of the two poets he admired most, Wordsworth and Rilke) meant acceptance of pain and death. He was a poet,

interested in form, and were pain and death not the formal conditions of life—perhaps then the poetry of life? The general and serene acceptance at which he aimed implied, then, a preliminary acceptance of the sinister.

And so, "it is hard," we find him complaining, "to love, in the right sense of accepting the world without the desire for possession. At this moment, I would like to reject the whole outer world, even to destroy it; another time, I feel something resembling physical desire for it . . . " Brooding on this ambivalent attitude of his towards the world, the tension between the desire for there to be no world and the state of the "mysterious beginning of puberty," when "the excitement and the strange *reality* of physical love could surround everything," without isolating any special object of love, he found himself confronting a spectre which the Romantics had raised but not laid: "death as a part of life, conceived in terms of sensual imagery . . . " Death could combine for him his two poles of desire and destruction; for we can think of Death as a personage, in love with the beauty of the world, but doomed by his touch to destroy, when he approaches beauty, even those particular images that have elicited his desire. Keyes himself seems to have felt a kind of guilty love for the world, a fear lest his touch should destroy what he loved, and yet a destructive resentment also because of the impossibility, arising from whatever oddity of temperament, of real contact. He notes that Helpmann's ballet of *Hamlet* was very sinister and cruel. Yet, he says, "I was able to accept the whole thing entirely without question . . . its total effect is one of great horror and pain—all the more so because one can well imagine that the moment of death will take such a form—though I certainly pray that it will not." That "great horror and pain" expresses itself, also, throughout his own work; many of his own poems are very sinister and cruel, and from the beginning when he makes Schiller say,

> pain's repeated
> All over the world's body, like a scar,

to the late *Foreign Gate*, where he makes a Roman General say,

> Let me speak out
> Against this sham of policy, for pain
> Alone is true,

we find that, however real his acceptance is, an obsession with pain and death has coloured the world he accepts to a very sombre hue. How is it, then, that we can read him with so much pleasure? One reason, I think, is that the world he accepted was not *the* world. It is a world real to him, but not actual to us. A certain remoteness, what he himself calls a "vaguely bogus atmosphere," allows us to accept his world as a special one, a world safely cut apart from ours by the framework of "poetry."

II

Of Rilke, his favourite modern poet, Keyes, in fact, had made the same

complaint that I have made about him; that Rilke's world is real, in the sense of being constructed out of what is universally the case, but not actual, in the sense of arising from or illuminating what particularly happens. It is a metaphysical world, over on the other side of our particular experience. Keyes' taste in language helped to give his own world, on general reaction against what one, too vaguely, calls the '30's. Auden and his generation had been eager to "take poetry off its pedestal": Keyes, and Heath-Stubbs, and their group at Oxford were eager to put it back there once more. From the days of the early Pound and Eliot, critics had been insisting that poetry should be "at least as well written as prose" (and rather *like* prose in flavour); the Oxford poets of the early years of the war represented a reaction, perhaps rather overdue, in favour of "poetical" poetry. They were part of a wider reaction, of which other elements were the growing popularity of Dylan Thomas and George Barker, and the increasing prestige of Dr. Edith Sitwell, as well as the whole vague movement (with its ambitious and implausible structure of theory) that was called "the new romanticism." In Keyes and Heath-Stubbs this reaction represented a genuine shift of taste. For a generation the poetry of the Regency and the Victorian age in England had been out of critical favour. The nineteenth century was a period which could be treated in a humorous or patronising manner, or with a certain caginess, as a rich, confused, complicated age, too near to us for us to see it in any perspective. Some of the poets of that period might be men of genius but it was agreed that the majority of them had inadequate understanding, stuffy attitudes, and poor taste. Many real felicities had therefore been neglected, and there was a whole poetic atmosphere to be rediscovered—particularly in minor writers like Hood, Beddoes, and Clare. Keyes *felt* the atmosphere of English romanticism, and enjoyed even those aspects of romanticism which it is fashionable to carp at. He could see the possible joke; he describes himself in one letter to Heath-Stubbs as "misery's son" and complains elsewhere of that "vaguely bogus atmosphere." But it was the atmosphere he wanted. Thus, here, no doubt, the botany is painstaking,

> Far-sighted catseye, that so soon turns blind
> And pallid after picking; the elder's curled flowers,
> And wastrel witch-tree; toadflax crouching
> Under a wall; and even the unpersistent
> Windflowers that wilt to rags within an hour . . .

but one has too strong a sense of pattern stitching, or of the tasteful concoction of poetry according to an approved recipe. Flattering the general reader with such agreeable reminiscences, Keyes has a technique that is just as likely to be overestimated by such a reader—a friend of mine, not a poet, compared him to "the young Keats"— as it is to be underestimated

by the practising poet, who looks everywhere for experiment. I do myself feel that in his first volume at least Keyes is playing pretty safe with language and would be more interesting if he took more risks; I feel that his language is rather threadbare and that he generally solves the problem of blank verse, as the Victorians did, by not taking fences. The figures that he puts up on these early pedestals could, with advantage often, be dusted and polished.

He developed, however. *The Cruel Solstice* seems to me to mark an astonishing *technical* advance on *The Iron Laurel*. Look again at that painstaking posy for John Clare, and then consider this dashing description of Aeneas, with its touch of Marlovian caricature,

> He came with hero's arms and bullock's eyes
> Afraid of nothing but his nagging gods . . .

Here are two uses of the same technique, one early and faulty, the other late and astonishingly supple. In a hobbling sort of way in this early passage,

> When London's talkers left you, still you'd say
> You were the poet, there had only been
> One poet—Shakespeare, Milton, Byron,
> And mad John Clare, the single timeless poet,

Keyes hops from one slippery cobblestone to another on the repetition of "poet": in this later passage he has learned to use such repetitions to thrust the line onward and make blank verse move at a run,

> They're driving to the famous land some call
> Posterity, some famine, some the valley
> Of bones, valley of bones, valley of dry
> Bones where there is no heat nor hope nor dwelling,

and finally he learns to use them to give unrhymed passages a kind of lyrical surge,

> The bright waves scour the wound of Carthage,
> The shadows of the gulls run spiderlike through Carthage,
> The cohorts of the sand are wearing Carthage
> Hollow and desolate as a turning wave . . .

I think that, as he may have been held back at first by the careful but unadventurous technique of such a poet as Arnold, so he may have been helped on latterly by the originalities within a traditional framework of such a poet as Yeats. Yeats, at least, is the only poet to whom he pays the compliment of an exercise in his manner, and it is a skilful exercise:

> By what chicanery of time
> May sword and sheath be separated?
> Silent be the singer who thinks of me
> And how I was defeated,

where the false rhyme ("When I consider life, 'tis all a *chate*") suggests the

lingering flavour of the eighteenth century in Dublin brogue, as the word "chicanery", also, suggests that lingering flavour in Dublin idiom.

Yet though he developed astonishingly, it is not as a technical innovator that Keyes will be remembered, and I am not sure even that he had, by the time he was killed, created for himself a quite distinctive *personal* style. There is not, it seems to me, a flavour that one recognises as his, as there is a flavour, for instance, that one recognises as Lawrence Durrell's. One recognises a poem by Keyes by its general good taste in language and by its elaborate system of exclusions. He showed a preference almost to the last, for the subject suggested by literature. *The Foreign Gate*, though it was written by a soldier on active service, might have been written as easily by a student among his books. Keyes had the scholar's mind for which the panorama the mind can create from the written word is more satisfactory than anything one can work up from the poor clues dropped by brute experience. He could deal best with what was distant in time or space, and therefore had perspective for him. "Timoshenko" is about a figure who for Keyes must have been purely legendary (what do we really know about the characters, the motives, or the tactics of Russian generals?) and the figure is visualised in a way, as I think Mr. Michael Meyer had suggested, that owes much to the German and Russian romantic cinema:

> He turned and his great shadow on the wall
> Swayed like a tree. His eyes grew cold as lead.
> Then, in a rage of love and grief and pity,
> He made the pencilled map alive with war.

But one would not gather much from his poems about what his own war, in Africa, was like. What could the experience of war add to his verse? He had already his metaphysical obsession with pain and death, his metaphysical sense of exile. Very sufficient to himself, he did not yield himself in comradeship nor draw strength, apparently, from the comradeship of others. He was not the drunken or licentious kind of soldier, a main note of his character was its rigorous self-containment. Knowing already by his great reading what he would find (and nourishing himself more by words than sensations), he got few fresh colours for his verse in foreign places. He is therefore, though one of the most subjective of poets, also one of the most impersonal. He is subjective in that the world he writes about is a world in his own mind, not a world of common experience (full as he is of echoes in his poetry, he avoids those echoes of common speech that might give a reader the misleading notion that he was dealing with the gross external world). He is impersonal, in that this mental world is his topic, and not himself in this world. His contemporary, Keith Douglas, is in both these respects his exact antithesis. Douglas is an objective and personal poet. The world that he writes about is the gross, external world. The figure whom he displays in action in that world is

himself. I have a predilection, myself, for the objective and the personal that makes me find Douglas the more attractive of these two talented poets.

Keyes had decided from the beginning (or his temperament had decided for him) to sacrifice immediacy to dignity, and the war did not alter that decision. Dignity is a fine thing, but immediacy is a high price to pay for it. Keyes is never trivial and never vulgar, and most contemporary poets who attempt to deal with the gross, external world are occasionally both of these things; but then neither is Keyes ever piercing. The pain and death that are his favourite themes are metaphysical, rather than empirical; most of us start on the empirical level, and have to pierce through somewhere to the metaphysical level; Keyes, starting on the other side, would have had at some time to pierce through in the opposite direction. He never, it seems to me, quite does; his pain and his death are too universal for him to come particularly home to us. There is something cold, smooth, resistent about the texture of his verse and his mind; in spite of the suppleness of the one, the passion of the other. There is a suggestion almost of something anaesthetic, as if only by assuming an extreme frigidity could he avoid, in his verse, some fatal emotional collapse; the strength of the poem constricts in on itself rather than expanding outward to the reader; there is a sense of some experience not so much slowly penetrating us, as being slowly withdrawn before our eyes. Each poem by Keyes is a fine construction in itself. But I at least do not find (as I find with some poets of less talent) that odd lines, phrases, images flake off the completed poem, and adhere to me, gradually dying away into the whole body of my experience, becoming part of my life, my mind.

III

I have suggested that with a technique of greater immediacy Keyes might have found much of his material impossible to handle. One of his most frigid poems, from the point of view of the general use of language, is a long one in his first volume, called *Gilles de Retz*. It is written in a tone of stiff and dignified rhetoric, in unexciting but adequate blank verse. Yet if the theme had been handled in any other way, it might, one feels, have broken down into hysteria or obscenity. Gilles de Retz, a French nobleman and a Marshal of France, a companion in arms of Joan of Arc, had retired to his lonely castle in his remote province, and given himself up there to abominations, defiling, torturing, and killing young children. He was at last brought to trial, and in the end executed, after, however, having confessed, repented, and reconciled himself to the Church. Keyes' poem is an attempt to explore the inner structure of such a mind. For him, these crimes of Gilles have a perverted religious motive, they are a sort of blasphemous attempt to bridge the terrible gap

between man and God. Estranged, as he feels, from the love of God, Gilles wishes to experience at least the presence of God as wrath,

> pure divine anger
> Piercing your safety like a lancet, or perhaps
> A flat knife working for years behind the eyes,
> Distorting vision . . .

Estranged, he seeks to imitate, or it would be truer to say, to *parody* God. Pain is as near as he can get to an absolute, it is his parody of the absolute of love:

> Pain is never personal;
> As love or anger unconfined, it takes
> Part in each moment and each person, unconfined
> By time or identity, like an atmosphere,
> There is no giving or receiving, only
> Pain and creation coming out of pain,
> Now I have made you angry; but think of this,
> Which is the stronger, my pain or your love . . .
> How I believed in pain, how near I got
> To living pain, regaining my lost image
> Of hard perfection, sexless and immortal.

In the end, Gilles repents, he realises the error of his terrible attempt to attract God's attention to him, and he asks that the crucifix in the room where the trial is taking place may be covered, so that Christ may not be insulted by the horrors he has to relate:

> Have mercy, Lord, on misdirected worship,
> On this soul dressed for death in hot black velvet.
> Bishop of Nantes, cover the cross.

This poem has a certain impressiveness as a dramatic soliloquy. It has also a certain unreality, which comes, I think, from Keyes in this as in other cases making the metaphysical assumption that there is a kind of real pain, more important than actual pain; I do not think there is. His mataphysics were those of an idealist, for whom the gross, external world is so much brute material until we have made a mental picture of it (this implies that some eternal mind must have made a mental picture of the world, before it could exist at all). The particular actual was only important to him in so far as it could be dissolved into the general real. But I do not think that the actuality of pain can be dissolved in this way. Keyes very properly leaves out of *Gilles de Retz* the hot, physical horror of his theme, but he puts in its place a kind of cold mental reflection of that hot, physical horror in the mind of *Gilles de Retz,* and this cold mental reflection is, for Keyes, the metaphysical reality of pain. But the physical actuality of pain is, in all conscience, enough. I do not think that pain has

this kind of metaphysical reality; I do not think that the actuality of pain can be conceived (it can only be experienced) or that my idea of pain resembles what pain actually is; my idea of colour is like colour, but my idea of toothache is not like toothache (if it were, I would try never to mention toothache). Other kinds of sensation we can make mental models of, isolate, and attend to; this does not seem to be the case with pain. It seems to be the peculiar characteristic of pain that, while it is undeniably physically *there*, it cannot really be metaphysically attended to. What Gilles de Retz was attending to, of course, was a kind of perverse pleasure he got from contemplating other people's pain; the pleasure was conditional on the pain's not being real to him, not being, that is, his own pain. Our own pain is something that we struggle against *because* we cannot attend to, that cannot sustain itself long (the very note of its nature being incoherence), and that soon either destroys itself, or destroys us to destroy itself. We can only stiffen ourselves against it, and when Keyes writes about pain he always writes with a rhetorical stiffness. I seem, however, to detect in *The Cruel Solstice* a progress (in the full sense of the word, a desirable development, in fact) from a preoccupation with pain to a preoccupation with death. Death provides Keyes with a kinder and more soothing set of images, and he can write about death with a lyrical gentleness,

> The red rock wilderness
> Shall be my dwelling place . . .
>
> The rock says "Endure."
> The wind says "Pursue."
> The sun says "I will suck your bones
> And afterwards bury you."

From pain to death marked a real progress in his way of acceptance: if he had lived, would he have written in a warmer, richer, more humane tone than he had yet achieved, about life itself?

Here and there, there are signs that he might have. He has a frail and touching love poem:

> There was a month and two people walked in it
> But were not you or I:
> My sight is broken and the signs are taken
> That kept me safe in abject poetry.

"Safe in abject poetry . . ." It is a late poem and a late judgment on his glumly insulated poetic world. He allows himself, in an oddly halting couplet, at last to express his personal fears,

> But I am frightened after every good day
> That all my life must change and fall away.

(If he had said "each good day", the scansion would be smoother, but

perhaps its faltering is expressive of his mood). He realises at last that

> Love being no frigid stonecrop-flower
> Blooms not among pride's wrack and sleet
> Nor ornaments an introverted tower.

Here again, as often where his feeling is unusually personal, his writing seems unusually uncertain. The metaphors are of the awkward sort that will neither stand up quite alive nor lie down quite dead, and the "introverted tower", however apt as a psychological comment, is baffling as a visual image. Yet passages like these show him, amid his fine gloom, feeling his way towards a less severely negative attitude. One little poem, dated September, 1942, even speaks with a quite ordinary lyricism of love satisfied:

> How dare I sing for you
> I the least worthy
> Of lovers you've had;
> You the most lovely
> Of possible landscapes?

"I've never yet failed to do anything I set myself to do . . ." That very luck of his was, in a sense, his misfortune; it explains his coldness, his purity, the monotony of his themes. The wise are those who have failed often, and awareness of past errors is the seed of future growth. His poems are those of a brilliant boy, who had meditated on reality in solitude, but whose hard will had saved him from that contact with the actual that would have made him at once less of a marvel and more of a man. The world might have been a grim fable he had invented. What he could not shape to his style he would not acknowledge. Yet I would like to believe that he was beginning to find significance in living and loving, in the fertile sown land of our mortality, and not merely, as at first, in its barren desert limits.

POETRY IN AUSTRALASIA

8. JUDITH WRIGHT (b. 1915)

BY PHILIP LINDSAY

Of Judith Wright's poetry it might well be said that she is the only woman who has kissed and told. Other women have sung of love, but apart from Sappho—and she, after all, was a man in female skin—none have written honestly and without shame of their desires. Usually we find that women poets were sexually inexperienced ladies, transmuting their desires into religious or metaphysical ecstasies, as with Emily Brontë and Christina Rossetti, or, like Emily Dickenson, they have had to invent a

lover on whom they could pour the passion of their starved hearts. The last thing I wish is to start a discussion on this question, and, of course, exceptions can be found, but it remains broadly true that sexual repression has commonly been the inspiration of women's art. When I was an art-student, I was surprised to notice how many girls showing genuine promise abandoned their work once they were married. It was as though a hitherto unsatisfied yearning had found completion and the substitute of painting was no longer needed. This is often true also of poetry. Elizabeth Barrett certainly continued to write after her marriage but she might as well never have married for all the revelation it brought into her work and she never unveiled the secrets of her womanly delight in love, save abstractly.

This, Judith Wright has done for us, the Sphinx answering the cry of man down the ages: "What is love to you?" when he holds his beloved in his arms. To explain what I mean, it were best that I quote the title-poem of her latest collection, *Woman to Man**:

The eyeless labourer in the night,
the selfless, shapeless seed I hold,
builds for its resurrection day—
silent and swift and deep from sight
foresees the unimagined light.

This is no child with a child's face;
this has no name to name it by:
yet you and I have known it well.
This is our hunter and our chase,
the third who lay in our embrace.

This is the strength that your arm knows,
the arc of flesh that is my breast,
the precise crystals of our eyes.
This is the blood's wild tree that grows
the intricate and folded rose.

This is the maker and the made;
this is the question and reply;
the blind head butting at the dark,
the blaze of light along the blade.
Oh hold me, for I am afraid.

* Miss Wright has published *The Moving Image* (No Date, Meanjin Press, Melbourne) and *Woman to Man* (1949, Angus and Robertson, Sydney and London).

By stressing this vital aspect of Miss Wright's poetry, I am liable to throw into darkness her other great qualities and the subtle beauty of her vision which sees with pity yet delight the colours of the world and its sounds and its unhappy people. There is haunting music in many of her lines which remain to sing in one's memory:

> While past the camp fire's crimson ring
> the star-struck darkness cupped him round,
> and centuries of cattlebells
> rang with their sweet uneasy sound.

Always her vision is a woman's vision whether she wonders on the miracle of a conch-shell or on the need for pain "that knifes us in blind alleys," on children or trees, on gardens, flowers or lonely spinsters lacking love, on the half-mad bullocky with his camp-fire in the bush, on the sick soldier Man-jack home from the war, on the dead snake and the ants that "drink at his hollow eye," on country-dances and the terrifying bush-fire, on the trapped dingo or the surfer or the half-caste girl, or whether she merrily laughs with a *Song in a Wine-Bar*?

> Toss up your spinning silver,
> wild boy, my sailor.
>
> We'll dance till Time is done
> who are hot with Time's fever.
> Among the tilting buildings
> gay boy, wild lover,
> we will go on dancing
> till our dancing day is over.
>
> Toss up your shining money,
> wild boy, my sailor,
> like a Saturday fountain,
> like a holiday river.
>
> Fill the lit street full
> of wine as hot as a lover;
> and we will go on dancing
> till Saturday night is over.

Such light-hearted gaiety is, however, rare in Miss Wright's work. Her feelings are too profound for such drunken moods to last, and continually she returns to contemplate that wonderful sensuous world of her own heart and to glory in her body that can contain her child. But as with all

true lovers, her love embraces the world and rejects disgust. Even the sight of the *Metho Drinker* stirs in her, not horror or even pity; she who is rich with love must see even this castaway as a lover:

> Under the death of winter's leave she lies
> who cried to Nothing and the terrible night
> to be his home and bread. "O take from me
> the weight and waterfall of ceaseless Time
> that batters down my weakness; the knives of light
> whose thrust I cannot turn; the cruelty
> of human eyes that dare not touch nor pity."
> Under the worn leaves of the winter city
> safe in the house of Nothing now he lies.
>
> His white and burning girl, his woman of fire,
> creeps to his heart and sets a candle there
> to melt away the flesh that hides the bone,
> to eat the nerve that tethers him in Time.
> He will lie warm until the bone is bare
> and on a dead dark moon he wakes alone.
> It was for Death he took her; death is but this
> and yet he is uneasy under her kiss
> and winces from that acid of her desire.

Here, as in all her poems, no matter what the subject, one senses her intense femininity. Impossible, one feels, would it be for any man to have written this. Take her portrait of *The Bull*:

> In the olive darkness of the sally-trees
> silently moved the air from night to day.
> The summer-grass was thick with honey-daisies
> where he, a curled god, a red Jupiter,
> heavy with power among his women lay.
>
> But summer's bubble-sound of sweet creek-water
> dwindles and is silent; the seeding grasses
> grow harsh, and wind and frost in the black sallies
> roughens the sleek-haired slopes. Seek him out, then,
> the angry god betrayed, whose godhead passes,
>
> and down the hillsides drive him from his mob.
> What enemy steals his strength—what rival steals
> his mastered cows? His thunders powerless,
> the red storm of his body shrunk with fear,
> runs the great bull, the dogs upon his heels.

I have quoted largely, for quotations are essential if you would appreciate my claim for Miss Wright as being the first woman honestly to unbare her lover's heart in verse; and I wish I could quote poem after poem. Wherever I dip into her books, lines demand my repeating them; but I dare not continue lest I overspill my space. At her best—and it is far from often that she falls below the high standard she has set herself—her poetry has in it fire and joy and, sometimes, terror. Also—and in this she is unique—she offers the open cup of love to any of us unafraid to look into the naked heart that is both the possessed and the possessing, that is both courageous and timid, both demanding and submissive, of a woman above the cowardly evasions of so many of her sex, one honest and proud of her strong womanhood that can excite and satisfy love. Humbly, I offer thanks and salute her courage.

TWELVE AT TABLE

Selected Poems, by John Masefield (William Heinemann, 10s. 6d.); *Wentworth Place*, by Robert Gittings (William Heinemann, 8s. 6d.); *Plain Song*, by Oliver Davies (Staples Press, 8s. 6d.); *Here Comes She Home*, by Geoffrey Fyson (Parthian Press, 7s. 6d.); *Poems of Love and Affairs*, by David Hardman (Allan Wingate, 5s.); *The Voices*, by B. R. Gibbs (Hutchinson, 6s.); *The Brightening Cloud*, by Frances Bellerby (Peter Davies, 7s. 6d.); *The Iron Harvest*, by Geoffrey Johnson (Williams and Norgate, 6s.); *The Encounter*, by R. H. Ward (Andrew Dakers, 5s.); *Annus Mirabilis*, by A. J. McGeoch (William Heinemann, 6s.); *Wise Men From The West*, by Arundell Esdaile (Andrew Dakers, 5s.); *More Fruit from an Old Tree*, by A. Vine Hall (Juta & Co., Cape Town, 6d.).

Reviewed by WILLIAM KEAN SEYMOUR

Another dozen of books of verse, with the Poet Laureate leading the way! And this new edition of Mr. Masefield's *Selected Poems* should remind us of the change that has come over the face of English Poetry since that first little book of lyrics which included "Sea-Fever" slipped shyly from the press. Go to the works of modernistic Messrs. A, B and C to see that change in full perplexing manifestation, and then—surveying the range of Mr. Masefield's astonishing if unequal performance—consider whether so violent a supersession by revolution has achieved much in the way of stimulating the appreciation of poetry in the general mind. It may be said his early popularity proves nothing,—but wouldn't we give something again to see large, lucid and comprehensible dramatic epics selling whole editions of literary monthlies, as happened when "The Everlasting Mercy"

led the way in the old *English Review?* Many thought then that the people would never go back to that indifference to poetry which, since Tennyson, only Kipling had shaken; but it seems sometimes that, after two wars, and *pace* the efforts of our own Society, the B.B.C. and the Arts Council, we must admit that the nation is more a collection of economic units with a passion for football pools than an audience for nests of singing birds.

At any rate, here is a selection from the works of one of the most truly dedicated poets of our century, one who has written perhaps more olympian lines than anyone now living. The excerpts from long poems are tantalising, but the sonnets alone provide a sufficient feast.

Coming at once to the younger generation, I heartily welcome our 1948 Greenwood Prize-winner, Mr. Robert Gittings, for his *Wentworth Place,* a book showing a quite extraordinary level of poetic competence flashed with brilliance. That Greenwood poem, "Acis and Galatea" has for me something of a Newdigate air and I much prefer other poems in the collection, notably the opening group of nine which concern Keats during his Hampstead period and are imaginative evocations from hints given by the poet and Mrs. Dilke in letters. These, with a somewhat similar treatment of Newton, are distinguished instances of the poetic dressing of literary history; but though the inspiration is to that extent second-hand, the result is extremely satisfying.

In the book of another contributor to these pages, Mr. Oliver Davies' *Plain Song,* there are surely more brief poems in short-lined metres than in any other contemporary collection; but this accords with a certain whimsical and epigrammatic turn of mind which I find refreshing. Here and there he extends his breath-length to four or five stanzas, as in "Relativity", but even in that poem the first verse might well stand alone:

> In what nice balance shall I weigh
> Myself against mankind and say
> Precisely my proportioned worth
> To England, Europe, and the Earth?

I commend Mr. Davies to verse-lovers who like at least one cultured chuckle before going to sleep.

The late Geoffrey Fyson's *Here Comes She Home* is a fitting memorial to a true poet whose health for thirty years was ruined by war experiences. If he had written only "They Shall Return" and "The Survivors" he would deserve a niche in the annals of human reconciliation; but all his work, though marred at times by derivative facility, bears the stamp of a sincere courageous spirit. How nobly he could write may be seen in this verse quoted from "E Pluribus Unus":

> Here in my body hangs the World in thrall,
> This moulded dust is servant to my brain;

Honours my being for an interval,
This dust that wakes, and sleeps, and wakes again.

A slender but confident talent is seen in Mr. David Hardman's *Poems of Love and Affairs*—a title which means somewhat less in sophistication than might be inferred. The "love" is mostly of the usual personal, rather idyllic order, while the "affairs" spring from the execution of Mihailovitch, from Budget reflections and indictments of communists and fellow-travellers (in which Mr. Hardman the Labour M.P. proclaims himself considerably to the right of their left). The piece that pleases me most is a high-spirited little affair which begins, "We might have loved, but the penny fell the other way" and ends with:

We maundered, lamented, tingled in our separate way,
She with delight, me, for I was lazy,
Knew how she'd drive me crazy—
Clinging, clacking, ample-bottomed Daisy.

Two women poets follow. With the title poem of *The Voices*, Mrs. B. R. Gibbs has won an American prize of one thousand dollars for a poem on the theme of "Individual and International Morality"—a considerable achievement in these days when poetry doesn't pay! Set themes are not often productive of first-class poetry, but there is something to be said for the mental discipline involved, and the result in this instance is a sincere if somewhat hortative blank-verse expression of the social conscience at work in Britain to-day. The other and briefer poems in Mrs. Gibbs' book are pleasantly and perceptively lyrical and range over a variety of well-realised themes and scenes.

Miss Frances Bellerby's *The Brightening Cloud* exhibits a greater familiarity with advanced verse-technique and a closer in-weaving of inspiration and the word-medium. She wears all the new fashions of assonance, half-rhymes and near-rhymes and delights in elliptical condensation in the heart of a mood flowingly lyrical. I find a crystal clarity in her vision of nature, as when she images a flash of light on a wet road as a skimming pebble:

As though meant to strike
The glassy heart of Winter,
Transparent shelter
Of folded life.

Elsewhere she pictures a dragonfly at rest on an apple tree as an "exquisite brooch pinned to the grey bark". This is a collection to savour often and gratefully.

The Iron Harvest is the latest book from one of the most productive of the good poets of to-day, and in Mr. Geoffrey Johnson's sensitive and accomplished verse I find a deep fraternal understanding of Man as a spirit, overflowing into descriptive and nature poems. So that the small boy stroking a rabbit suggests an "atoning tenderness" for time's cruelties,

while a ruined fold by a treeless tarn makes him conscious of

> Europe's homeless on bomb-riven hills
> Running unshepherded they know not where.

There is nothing forced or strained about this poet's work; its note is one of indwelling simplicity in artistry of a high order.

Also rewarding in a batch of worthwhile books is Mr. R. H. Ward's *The Encounter,* a sequence of untitled poems. Here again is no striving after technical new effects, any more than we find in Housman or Ralph Hodgson. Mr. Ward's quatrains, though bare and pared, yet convey a richness of meditated beauty springing from the contemplation of the poet's own part in the drama of life. Some of the poems are almost unbearably sad, but all move to a recognition of the universal principle:

> I know all things are one, that if I touch
> Our common earth, a grass-blade or a tree,
> The nature of reality is such
> That I touch you and you, in these, touch me.

A less profound vision of nature is revealed in Mr. A. J. McGeoch's *Annus Mirabilis,* but what he gives instead are loving pictures of its surface forms in verse impeccably smooth, such as:

> Nor breath nor tremor stirred that azure glass,
> Wherein the still trees saw themselves amazed,
> Save where a darting pike among drowned grass
> And weeds in sandy shallows far inshore
> Above his long green back a tiny wavelet bore.

Poem after poem in this pleasant collection exhibit this admirable capacity for word-etching.

Dr. Arundell Esdaile is so well known for his work at the English Association and the British Museum that many readers will be anxious to sample *Wise Men From the West,* his first book of verse since his nonage. They will find urbanity, reverence, scholarship and wit, and at least one stanza that should be pondered by all instinctive poets:

> The first thought for a poem floats as free,
> As vague as mist, and only in the bond
> Of hard precipitating art can be
> Round as a pearl, clear as a diamond.

Finally, there is a pamphlet publication; the "last" little collection on that amazing octogenarian poet, the Revd. A. Vine Hall, *More Fruit From an Old Tree,* a little sheaf compacted of experience and wisdom, the author having reached final conclusions about God and Man and found them good. Let the vine still flourish!

SUBLIMITIES SURVEYED

The Life and Times of Po Chu-I: Arthur Waley (Allen and Unwin, 18s.).
The Time is Free—A Study of Macbeth: Roy Walker (Dakers, 8s. 6d.).
New Light On Pope, with some Additions to his Poetry hitherto Unknown: Norman Ault (Methuen, 30s.).
Goethe: UNESCO'S Homage on the 200th Anniversary of His Birth. (*UNESCO —1949*).
Immortal Diamond—Studies in Gerard Manley Hopkins, edited by Norman Weygand, S. J. (Sheed and Ward, 25s.).
Yeats: The Man and the Masks: Richard Ellmann (Macmillan, 21s.).

Reviewed by J. B. WRIGHT

Of the "170 Chinese Poems" which Mr. Waley published in 1918, sixty are by Po Chu-I, and they are introduced by a biographical sketch which cries out for development into a full-scale biography. This is what Mr. Waley has now given us, together with 100 new translations.

The civilisation he evokes was contemporary with the Carolingian renaissance in Western Europe, and the flowering of Islamic culture in Spain. It was refined and stylised to the point of disintegration, riddled with nostalgia and defeatism; it was human and doomed. The ruling dynasty foundered sixty years after Po's death in 846, and the period of his lifetime has something of the quality of the *ancien régime* in France: the need for reform was admitted, but nothing was done. The bureaucracy perpetuated itself, multiplied unrealities. All candidates for official posts had to practice verse composition, so that at the entrance examinations they could extemporise on themes like "Jade-bearing waters may be recognised by their rectilinear ripples." Knowledge of the art of versification was thus widespread, but the prevailing style was a more hermetic kind of Gongorism. In sharp contrast, the verse of Po Chu-I was characterised by extreme simplicity: like Molière, he is said to have read his works to an old peasant woman, altering all the words she could not understand. Po became the great popular poet of his day.

This is a magnificent book by a great scholar and an original craftsman in verse. In its power of putting one at the heart of a dead society, its precision of detail, and its fresh humanity, it reminds at least one reader of the memoirs of Saint-Simon, or Casanova.

Mr. Walker has followed up his study of "Hamlet", *The Time is Out of Joint,* with a study of "Macbeth". In the earlier book, he showed a marked capacity for getting to the heart of the matter and staying there: he is a critic who never for a moment takes his eye off the ball. The same

qualities are apparent in his new book. He has experienced "Macbeth" profoundly, and he bases his interpretation on that experience, rather than on textual or constructional criticism. The result is an exciting piece of writing, which has often the warmth, confidence and inner logic of creative literature. Mr. Walker's readers will experience Act III (iii) with a new prickle of the scalp, while his identification of Hecate with the evil genius of Lady Macbeth, balancing the identification of the 3rd Murderer with that of Macbeth himself, is something to be put beside De Quincey on the knocking at the gate.

The renaissance of interest in Pope, initiated by Lytton Strachey and Edith Sitwell, among others, did not succed in making him "significant": that is, the contemporary seekers of avatars and precursors were not encouraged to bracket him with, say, Donne, Nerval, Hopkins and Rimbaud. His marmoreal surface was shown to be a uniquely poised violence of expression, his classicism a compound of near-romanticism and native realism, but there was still something that kept him outside our century. Was it the form of his poetry?—but that has been no obstacle to contemporary appreciation of Dryden; or the peculiarly public cast of his poetic personality?; or the unamiable lineaments of the traditional portrait of Pope the man? Perhaps a little of all three.

Mr. Ault's book, the fruit of twenty years' study of the period, aims at nothing less than redrawing that portrait. He shows the legend taking shape, and demonstrates on how much dubious evidence it is based. He analyses the quarrels that run through Pope's life like love affairs through another man's; he proves that Pope was capable of great friendships. Finally, presumably to meet possible charges of Pope's being "un-English", he shows us Pope the dog-lover. It is all delightful, in a *Notes & Queries* sort of way, but at the end of it the bridge between Pope and ourselves is still unbuilt.

The new poems that Mr. Ault has identified show Pope as the supreme master of occasional verse.

Thirteen writers, including Croce, Thomas Mann and Jules Romains were asked by UNESCO to write about Goethe for the bicentenary celebrations last year: their responses make up this volume. It does not pretend to be a learned work. There are no references or footnotes, and the essays run as loosely as interviews. Each writer has contented himself with saying simply and sincerely what Goethe has meant to himself and to the kind of civilisation he has known. The question of sincerity is in fact raised by two of the contributors: Croce and Herr Beutler, Director of the Frankfurt Goethe Museum, who compare favourably in this respect the ragged but spontaneous homages of 1949 with the hollowly official celebrations of 1932. The biggest gun of all provides innocuous marginal comment on *Werther*. But what is there that he can add to *Lotte in Weimar?*

Thomas Mann has done more than write about Goethe: he has continued him.

Immortal Diamond is made up of eleven essays written by American members of the Society of Jesus, during 1944, the centenary of Hopkin's birth, together with a glossary and an appendix of contemporary accounts of the wrecks of the "Deutschland" and "Eurydice". There is a freshly-written biographical introduction, and a long essay which defines sprung rhythm once and for all, while the appendices, in the good plain journalistic prose of 1878, making haunting enough narratives in their own right. But the glossary gives the game away. The quick of Hopkins' style is the poignant Anglo-Saxon speech of farm and nursery: the whetted edge of English. It is the language of the first naming of things in childhood, and no one whose sense of its roundness and rootedness is not still vivid is qualified to set up as a Hopkins' critic. I cannot see that the authors of these studies have this essential qualification: their glossary of obscure words is, in fact, full of such bright common words as damson ("a small, dark purple plum"), hutch, sloe and farrier—all words which in Hopkins depend for their effect wholly on the presence of just that awareness in the reader. This is a fundamental defect, which no amount of perfervid exegesis can redeem.

Yeats' the Man and the Masks is another example of the American doctoral thesis turned book, and a more pleasing one than most. Mr. Ellman has got rid of much of the grit of that formidable Harvard, academic style: he deploys his facts, and mounts his quotations, cunningly. How "Byzantium" blazes in the setting he gives it on page 275, for instance: He hunts indefatigably for the influences and moods behind the poems, but his special care is for the course of Yeats' titanic struggle for clarity and wholeness or, as Yeats himself called it, Unity of Being. He is especially good on the confused decade 1890-1900, that fissiparous time when Yeats seemed to be three or four men, all out of step, and none able to impose unity of purpose on the others. The last desperate years are characterised memorably: the prodigious spectacle of the mounting, combing, breaking wave.

CRITICAL ATTITUDES

Science, Life and Literature by M. P. Shiel, with a Foreword by John Gawsworth (Williams and Norgate; 10s. 6d.).

Comedy by L. J. Potts (Hutchinson; 7s. 6d).

Phases of English Poetry by Herbert Read (Faber; 10s. 6d.).

Introduction to the Study of Literature by Lionel Elvin (Sylvan Press; 10s. 6d.).

The Education of the Poetic Spirit by Marjorie L. Hourd (Heinemann; 10s. 6d.).

Symbol and Metaphor in Human Experience by Martin Foss (Princeton University Press; $3).

The Golden Well by Dorothy Donnelly (Sheed and Ward; 10s. 6d.).

Reviewed by JOHN ROWLAND

Last year Mr. Randall Swingler, writing in these pages of M.P. Shiel, reminded members of the Poetry Society of an occasion in 1937 when that writer of genius read his own poems at a meeting in Russell Square. Shiel now appears in what is to me a new guise. His posthumous collection of essays, presented, with a Foreword by Mr. Gawsworth, his executor and former collaborator, covers ground as wide as its title would suggest. And it has an attraction even for the reader who has not already fallen a victim of that strange poetic prose which was ever typical of Shiel. In these essays he writes simply and straightforwardly, almost as if he realised that this statement of his aesthetic and religious philosophy had to be easily understood. Certainly most readers will find much of value in it; particularly in his essays "On Reading" and "On Writing" which contain most original criticism of great poets from Homer to Meredith.

After Shiel, Mr. Potts, Fellow of Queen's College, Cambridge, seems rather flat; but his discussion of the development of comic writing, from Chaucer to Shaw, gives within small compass a useful summary of material not, I think, found in one succinct volume elsewhere.

Mr. Herbert Read is a critic whose stature has steadily grown in recent years; and even though his *Phases of English Poetry* is a reprint, with some additional matter, of a book which made its first appearance about twenty years ago, it is not difficult to see why so many thoughtful writers of the younger generation now regard Mr. Read as their master. "My particular design," says Mr. Read, "was initiative rather than critical"—and as an initiation into poetry his book will, I think, again be found useful and suggestive.

Mr. Elvin's aim is wider—it is no less than to study English poetry in its development and in its practice at the present time. This volume, which deals wholly with poetry, is to be followed by two later volumes, dealing with the novel and the drama. When the scheme is complete, it should provide the student with a really worth-while outline of literature.

The Education of the Poetic Spirit, by Miss Marjorie Hourd, is more strictly practical. It is a study of the way in which schoolchildren, doing normal "English," may feel their way towards some measure of self-expression. It will be of special interest to teachers; others, however, may

derive some genuine delight from the specimens given of children's early efforts at writing verse.

My last two volumes are, in a sense, complementary. Mr. Foss discusses symbolism in its widest possible sense, pointing out that the age in which we live expects to find the answers to most of its problems in the symbols of science, but going on to show that the symbols of art also have their special validity in their own spheres. Miss Donnelly's book, with the sub-title, "an anatomy of symbols," is more concerned with the symbolism of religion. What she has to say has its value and importance, but her book is the least satisfactory of the seven with which I have here been concerned. This is not so much because of its matter as because of its manner. Miss Donnelly clearly feels that she has an important message; but she surrounds that message with such a complex and intricate pattern of words that it is not at all easy to decide what she is trying to say.

As I re-read what I have written I feel that I have been not quite fair to some of the writers under consideration; I would therefore summarise my feelings about these seven books by saying that there are two which I think will have a general appeal among all people of literary interest—those of Shiel and Mr. Read. The others are definitely books for specialists, though none the worse for that.

SHORT REVIEWS

No Summer Song by James Brockway (6s.); *The Cross in the Cup* by Henry Forbes (6s.); *Music at Midnight* by Muriel Grainger (5s); *Pine Silence* by Madge Hales (5s.); *The Immortal Home* by J. K. G. Hoffman (6s.); *Wind on the Heath* by Editha M. Kelly (5s.); *The Flowering Tree* by Daryl Klein (6s.); *The Column in the Valley* by Daryl Klein (5s.); *The Soliloquists* by J. W. R. Purser (6s.); *Flowers and other Poems* by Charles F. Sharp (6s.); *Remember Arnhem* by Gerard R. B. Sheldon (6s.); *The Death of William Rufus* by John Sibly (6s.); *In Yeovil Town* by Charles Whitby (6s.).
(All Fortune Press publications).

Getting poetry published today is a difficult task. The commercial publishers very naturally cold-shoulder all but a very few poets; so that it remains for the private presses and small-scale publishers to produce first volumes of verse by new poets. *The Fortune Press* has specialised in printing the works of such writers. James Brockway's verse is lyrical, pleasantly rhythmical, studded with traditional images and associations aptly applied. The standard of honest craftmanship exhibited by his work is encouraging—one feels that there is a general return to order and quality. He can be lyrical or satirical.

Marred frequently by interrupted rhythms and by imperfect rhymes (e.g. "vision" and "prison") Mr. Forbes' poems, when religious and direct, are nevertheless moving and sincere. Where he has attempted a verbal texture and an imagery which is in any way daring he is unsuccessful. For instance

> our reeling souls abused
> By the scenic railways of our doubts, our fears
> In swing-boats, and our dizzy brains confused.

Muriel Grainger in almost all her poems has the power to "fix" a moment of time in which some transient thing is at its most beautiful. The subjects of her poems, The Air on the G String by Bach, a girl in a posture which would be a gift for Botticelli, violets and a white shell seen together for a moment, show her sense of taste and admirable creative opportunism. It is a book to be enjoyed from end to end by any but the dull insensitive or the literary snob.

Madge Hales is immediately distinguished from the first three of our "fortunate" poets by a maturity and an "inclusive" attitude towards phenomena which the others lack. Her work is deeply feminine, sensitive, and can accept objects traditionally not considered poetic and translate them into poetry. Some poets tend either to exclude, or quite blatantly introduce a jarring note like pylons or machinery without integrating it in the poetic texture. Madge Hales' work is sometimes flat but never anything but homogeneous.

One of the most remarkable things about our "fortunate" poets is that their work seems to have sprung from nowhere, influenced by nothing. A total absence of *style* distinguishes them all. Mr. Hoffman's verse is lyrical, he is an aesthete who delights in very simple pretty things and very trite thoughts. He expresses these preoccupations prettily sometimes, usually spoiling the prettiness by some quite irrelevant word dragged in to supply a rhyme. Editha M. Kelly shows in her work a sense of form. Her lyrical poems are rather given to poetic *clichés* and her attempts at satirical verse, where significantly she abandons any regular form, sink into mediocre prose. Her poem *The Critics* should be compared with Mr. Pound's *Mr. Nixon* to see just how outmoded and how weak a piece of writing her's is.

Daryl Klein's *The Flowering Tree* is more concerned with China than with poetry. The introduction is devoted to a discussion of relations between China and the West. The poems themselves are based on Chinese subjects mainly. Mr. Klein's *The Column in the Valley* is more ambitious. Its intention is plainly of epic proportion, and although the publisher's blurb says that it is not a "literary epic", the author of the introduction states that it is a poem "in epic form which seeks to set out symbolically the upward struggles of humanity towards the conquest of

its environment, and man's moral failure". Influences as ill-assorted as T. S. Eliot and Milton do not assist the reader to enjoy this confused and formless poem.

J. W. R. Purser's poems are thoughtful and interesting. They are put in the mouths of three soliloquists, a sceptic, a philosopher and a poet. Mr. Purser's Irish background is very apparent and both the rhetoric and sensibly colloquial language which are the chief components of his verse are both Irish and workmanlike. The shorter poems are lyrical and often nostalgic. Charles F. Sharp's verses are mainly ballads based on short stories or events in history. They read smoothly. Many of them are about the recent war.

The best of Gerard B. Sheldon's poems is a pastiche of one of the earlier more vulgar poems of Mr. Cecil Day Lewis. One of Mr. Sibly's best poems is *Storm at Kew*.

> And we crowd in the garden huts as the tracer volleys of rain
> Begin and the wind comes on with the whoop and stoop of a train,
> And we gaze at the croziered ferns, till the sun comes again.

Charles Whitby's work is prefaced by an attractive poem by Padraig O'Horan. The selection itself is refreshingly diverse in its nature and includes the beautiful poem addressed in 1947 to Padraig O'Horan

> Priest-poet of Priddy, Mendip's holy place,
> Padraig whose gay laugh of care's cobwebs frees us . . .

One has a sense of poetry being used, for once, as it should be, as a manner of communication between men.

PETER RUSSELL.

Robert Armstrong, *Seventeen Poems* (The Faun Press, 9 Queen's Gate, S.W.7, 2s. 6d.); Wilfred H. Bartlett, *Soliloquy in Summer* (Williams and Norgate, 6s.); Olive Barton, *A Poet's Inmost Meditations* (Stockwell, 9d.); June Benians, *Bright Leaves Fall* (Bowes and Bowes, 2s. 6d.); Olguita Q. Berington, *Different Like a Zoo* (Palladium Press, 6s.); Lois Deacon, *From a Plymouth Pen* (Underhill, Regent Street, Plymouth); Vera Fartash, *Leaves of Spain* (Stockwell, 3s. 6d.); Stanley Gregory, *Times and Tides* (Johns, Newport, 5s. 6d.); Alison Haldane-Duncan, *To a Queen* (Mitre Press, 5s.); Stowers Johnson, *Sonnets, They Say*—(Walpole Press, 6s.); E. M. Jones, *Collected Poems* (Mitre Press, 5s.); Andrew Keith, *Poems* (King, Littlewood, and King, 2s. 6d.); McFee Kerr. *Poems* (Maclellan, 2s. 6d.); Sir Patrick Laird, *Figments and Fantasies* (Serif Books, 5s.); Ernest Miles, *From Brabourne* (Author, Gay Cottage, Brabourne Lees, Ashford, Kent, 1s.); Ernest Page, *XIV Poems* (The Caravel Press, 9 Queen's Gate, S.W.7; 1s. 6d.); Norman Pallant, *Songs in Solitude* (Forest Press, 11 Russell Road, N.8, 2s. 6d.); J. Sackville-Martin, *From Hellas*

to Limerick (Stockwell); W. G. Shakespeare, *A Winter Fragment* (Mitre Press, 7s. 6d.); William Wolff, *The Watcher* (British Authors' Press, 6s.).

The term "minor poet" has often been used in a derogatory sense; I do not know that this is altogether fair. That there is room in poetry for many figures who would not claim to possess either the power or the insight of the greatest masters is undeniable; that the twenty contemporaries whose works are listed above would, for the most part, regard themselves as being in this category is probably true. Yet these are individual voices, voices which for the most part speak in accents recognisably their own, voices which cannot be accused of being mere echoes of admired masters.

Mr. Armstrong's little book, for example, is selected from a collection recently published in braille for the National Institute for the Blind, and there is one poignant poem, "Sight," which contains the lines:

> "I have known blind who saw
> And sighted folk who could not see."

Mr. Armstrong, like most of the others whose work is being briefly considered here, is a traditional poet, with rhyme and rhythm and all complete. The experimentalists are hardly represented—which is to say that most of these books make pleasant, easy reading. Mr. Bartlett, simple and straightforward, Miss Barton, sentimental in the best sense of that often misused word, and Miss Benians, quiet and at the same time keenly observant, are typical of the best kind of minor poet. Miss Berington is a little different. Her verses are flippant, almost slapdash—and yet there is a definite accent which speaks of a highly individual temperament.

Miss Lois Deacon includes with her verses an address on Charlotte Brontë, given in Plymouth last year; it is not often that satisfying criticism is found within the same covers as pleasant original verse of this kind. Miss Fartash, on the contrary, is more conventional—especially in her love-lyrics. Mr. Gregory is a blind poet; there seems to be something about blindness which since Milton makes for economy of words. Mrs. Haldane-Duncan, on the other hand, in her attempts to interpret the modern Greeks to a British audience, is eloquent and romantic.

To appraise some of these poets briefly is difficult; but I hope that readers will bear in mind that they are all trying to say something, and often succeeding. Mr. Stowers Johnson's sonnets, dealing with British and Continental scenes, will be welcome to all lovers of this poetical form; Miss E. M. Jones has more than once been commended by adjudicators of competitions in this magazine. Mr. Andrew Keith likewise deals with traditional subjects in a traditional way, yet with an individual touch of his own. Mr. McFee Kerr, Paris correspondent of a London newspaper,

presents pictures of the strange post-war world on the continent. And Sir Patrick Laird, another of the occasionally flippant ones, presents at least one memorable Clerihew in:

"Jane
Will normally be homely and plain;
But occasionally (to be fair)
She has an Eyre."

Mr. Ernest Miles's *From Brabourne* is almost the only pastoral poem in this group. Mr. Ernest Page, though slight, is sometimes memorable. Most noteworthy in Mr. Pallant's book is his sonnet sequence, "The Roses." With Mr. Sackville-Martin we are back at the Clerihew stage again:

"Whether Plato
Or the discoverer of the potato
Most benefitted each successive generation
Is a matter for consideration."

And Mr. W. G. Shakespeare provides the ideal commentary on one of the tendencies of the twentieth century in his epitaph on a politician:

"Happy at last in slumber deep
Who spent his whole life half asleep."

Finally, by the accident of the alphabet, comes Mr. Wolff, whose poems are the nearest approach to "modernism" in this group.

Twenty voices; they have all spoken to me. I hope that they will speak to others. But how many of them will remain in my memory in ten years time? That is a question which only the years can answer.

HERBERT SHELLEY.

Beyond the Terminus of Stars by Hugo Manning (Phoenix Press, 5s.); *After Every Green Thing* by Dannie Abse (Hutchinson, 5s.); *The Pattern of a Dark* by John Sundowne (Phoenix Press, 6s.); *No Leafless Land* by Ernest Miles (Fortune Press, 6s.); *A Word in Silence* by Ben Sowerby (Fortune Press, 5s.).

Mr. Sundowne says, rather disarmingly, that "Each person's mind is a map or a chart, . . . and art is very often a working out of the figures on the chart . . . a creating of a pattern of the dark of a mind as self-defence . . . These poems are the beginnings of a working out of a pattern or a chart." Well, they may be: but if the darkness is exclusively his own, so must the chart of it be. Those poems in his book which most arouse that immediate response which is one of the hall-marks of poetry are the ones where the pattern is worked out *before* the poem is written, that are poems on a single *grasped* idea, like numbers XV, XXVII, and XXX.

Mr. Hugo Manning's book carries no note, disarming or otherwise, and I must confess that its meaning, either in its whole drift or in its individual sequences, eludes me entirely, and the few lines in it that pleased me for their texture or imagery are not quotable out of their context. Mr. Manning must forgive me if I maintain that this is not altogether my fault, and if I insist that it is not the reader's duty to clarify obscurity for the poet.

Mr. Dannie Abse's book is certainly vivid, though I cannot myself accept his publisher's other high claims for his work. But I am glad to have read "To a Younger Poet", "Poem in November", and "The Uninvited ', which last, I feel, will not be missed by discerning anthologists.

Mr. Ernest Miles's is very obviously a first book, with all the faults of a first book—bad selection, lack of humour, rather ordinary ideas presented in too-ornate language—and also with the somewhat disarming enthusiasm of first writing. He observes and feels, but has yet to learn that, for transmutation into art, observation must be illuminating as well as descriptive, and feeling dissociated from sentiment. Neither conventional patriotic sentiments nor lists of pleasant things make poetry in themselves, any more than do the thick surrealist images of the extremists.

Mr. Ben Sowerby's *A Word in Silence,* too, has some of the same first-book lack of judgment and restraint, but it also has thoughtfulness and insight, an excellent feeling for the precise rather than the pretty or startling word, and a long, well-sustained title poem of considerable depth of content and dexterity of handling. He is a poet, I feel, whose development will be worth watching.

JAMES WALKER

The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, read by Ronald Bennett. ("Poesie" Recording, 6, Manor Road, Audenshaw, Manchester. Three records, 10s. each.)

These records would seem to be an experiment in verse-speaking. The text is *well* spoken if the reciter considers it his job to impersonate the Poet—but does not this defeat the Art itself? The reciter is a voice and not an actor and much of the simplicity and beauty of the verse is lost when the listener is forced to become voice-conscious. The words of Omar Khayyam are religious and poetic philosophy of the highest order and lend themselves better to a simple lyrical interpretation than to an impression of the Poet. The poet's only desire is to live through words. The duty of the reciter is to interpret clearly and sincerely the Poet's thought and not the Poet's voice.

MOLLIE HUDSON.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

PETÖFI

SIR,

The excessive and revolutionary verses of Petöfi are but a small fraction of the imposing bulk of his lyrical poetry. Why should a selection be made, which is bound to give the impression, that Petöfi, a poet of loving tenderness, wanted to kill, hang and burn his fellow-men, according to about every sixth of his poems? I do not know how the translations under review came into being. But it is surely not praiseworthy to manipulate, under whatever considerations, the works of a fine lyricist to the effect that they should have propaganda-value for the present Russian-controlled Hungarian Government. I do not say, that this was the translators' intention, only that this could be the result of such a selection. After all, Petöfi was killed fighting the Russians. I suggest to Mr. Delmar, that when choosing from the work of a poet, we honour him most by choosing the best, the best as poetry. Forget why and how a poet died. Suppose the poet was a lover of dogs, and died saving a drowning dog. Would you, Mr. Delmar, omit the truly good lyrics and choose the doggy poems, however deplorable, on the grounds that your poet died for a dog?

In my review, I paid a loving tribute to Petöfi's lyrical genius. Mr. Delmar, whose translation of the selected poems reveals that shades of meaning are of little importance to him, seems to pay as little attention to the simple meaning of words, when he accuses me of presenting Petöfi as a "half-witted political pamphleteer". I never did, nor ever will say such a thing. A lyrical genius, a truly great poet is never "half-witted". His half-wit is larger than the ordinary man's whole mind. What I said was, that a young man lacks the maturity of judgment which only the experience of riper years can give in matters of politics and philosophy. And I also said, that it is unfair to include such immature material in a small selection of poems, because, as it is my belief, our essential literary duty is to protect a poet who died young, and not distort his image by painting scarlet the red pimples of his youth.

If I were to apply the word "half-witted", I would apply it to the last paragraph of Mr. Delmar's letter. He desires to cosh the literary world by quoting the following statement by Professor Yolland (the logical analysis is mine): "if Matthew Arnold had known Hungarian, if he had read Petöfi in the original, if we had a chance of asking his opinion, it is not impossible, that Matthew Arnold would have placed Petöfi side by side with Shakespeare, Dante, Homer, Milton, etc., etc. ..." Such a statement is unverifiable, void of meaning, and absurb in its claim in as far as it can be established. No one who has read Matthew Arnold would believe, that this profound thinker would place a young lyricist, writing in a young, emergent language, side by side with the greatest minds of the Western World. I am sure, that Petöfi himself would have brushed aside claims so absurd as to be ridiculous. What basis is there for comparing Dante with Petöfi? How can you compare folklore and fairy-tale, with the maturest products of epic grandeur, religion and philosophy? Petöfi is and remains the greatest lyricist of the new, emerging Hungarian language in the nineteenth century. But it would be Hungarian megalomania to think him an equal of Homer or Shakespeare. I blush for Mr. Delmar. He should have let Professor Yolland's if-conditioned statement fade away into oblivion. As it is, he is not only impressed by watching somebody milking a billy-goat, but hurries along to hold a sieve under his friend's busy hands.

JOSEPH BARD.

THE HOWARD PARSONS EPIGRAM COMPETITION

After successive centuries, we have come, in this country, to prefer the satiric Roman form of epigram, as exemplified by Martial and Catullus, rather than the moral elegance of the major part of the "inscriptions" contained in the Greek anthology, although both Herrick and Jonson introduced much of the Greek spirit into their charming work.

Yet a lightness and ease, buoyancy and grace, has been lent to the Roman form by the succession of great English epigramatists and we have learned to point clearly or to slay cleanly in rapier fashion rather than to flatten with a broad bludgeon.

It is in this sense that I have applied my judgment in distilling the three winners from the many entries.

For the most part the axioms I have outlined were truly observed but the turn of wit was the preserve of the few and some mistook a long satiric poem for the more compact form.

The winner has successfully achieved the delight and grace and pungency of our English heritage and if the second and third fell short in the last mentioned quality they are no less replete with charm and grace.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG.

NEW FORMS IN ART

The muse is woman. Woman-like, she needs
At times to show the world a change of dress,
While still to favoured lovers she concedes
Her one enduring guise, her nakedness.

W. A. B. GARDENER.

VIEWPOINT

The wise have sought in star, and hand, and face,
Pasts to decipher, destinies to trace;
And called us fools who nothing more demand
Than that there should exist star, face and hand.

JOAN BEAUMONT.

FAR RECOMPENSE

I picked my child some Rosemary: for thanks
There flashed, in insubstantial flight, as dips
A darting bird between a river's banks,
My long-dead father's smile across her lips.

ARTHUR CADDICK.

THE POETRY SOCIETY'S JUNIOR SECTION

WORD MAGIC

I think it was Dr. Johnson who said that words are the daughters of earth and certainly they have all the magic of life. They are born, grow old, die, and during their life change as they age. They have parents and children and are affected by environment.

Therefore, they should never be treated as struck and inert coinage, kept in a pocket, but rather as living entities. Each is surrounded by a "cloud of witnesses", associations in our mind testifying to their value and vitality, evoking thoughts, feelings and pictures.

We all use them, but to use them aright it is not sufficient to admire or even love, it is very necessary to have a deep abiding passion for, and in time to become obsessed by them. How else can one turn them into the sorcery of language that is poetry?

Some are gaunt and hard; others, melodious and colourful; some hiss, splutter and splash; some rock, grind and are lumpy; some have the brilliance of the diamond: some the deep heart of the ruby; and some are as fragile and as intricate as the spider's web. All have characters and personalities and all the similes can apply, but they will not suffice and perhaps it would be better to say that words can be all that you have thought and felt and are; and all that you will become.

How are these beauties—and beasts, mixed with the clogging dust of words like "is", "and", "but", "which", "to" so that the result stirs us as nothing else can. Marvel at the strange and expressive glory of:—

the tide of pomp
That beats upon the high shore of this world.

Devouring Time, blunt thou the Lion's paws,
And make the earth devour her own sweet brood;
Pluck the keen teeth from the fierce Tiger's jaws,
And burn the long-liv'd Phoenix in her blood;

For I have far to go, if death be far

When the wide river was a silver sheet,
And on the ocean slept th' unanchor'd fleet.

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies,

visited all night by troops of stars

Brightness falls from the air;
Queens have died young and fair;
Dust hath closed Helen's eye,

And see the gold air and the silver fade
And the last bird fly into the last light.
Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
Stands tip-toe on the misty mountain-tops.

See, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament

There is no system nor order in these, merely a casual up-springing in the memory.

C. E. Montague, writing on this very point said:—

"When I was an idle boy going to school and discovered the lines, out of Scott,

Yet the lark's shrill fife may come
At the day-break from the fallow
And the bittern sound his drum,
Booming from the sedgy shallow,

they made me so drunk with delight and I had to walk up and down empty compartments of trains, saying them over and over again, as incapable as a bluebottle either of sitting quiet or ceasing to hum."

Are these then "phrases turned"? No, they are created, wrought by artist-craftsmen with the passionate devotion, the audacious endeavour, the arduous integrity of a pilgrim.

Perhaps you would like to tell me of lines that have shaken YOU out of your accustomed calm.

May I leave you with the words of Ben Jonson recorded in First Folio:—

" . . . . . And, that he,
Who casts to write a living line, must sweat
(Such as thine are) and strike the second heat
Upon the Muses anvile; turne the same,
(And himselfe with it) that he thinks to frame;
Or for the lawrell, he may gaine a scorne,
For a good Poet's made, as well as borne.
And such wert thou. JOHN GRADDON.

Here follow the poems of the other prizewinners in the JUNIOR VERSE COMPETITION. I hope you like them as much as I do:—

SEA MUSIC

Written by Colina MacDougall at the age of 15.

Through grey-green thunder of Atlantic surge
  And sun-caught spray, or creaming surf on jade,
The symphony of ocean will converge
  To call me with the waters' serenade.

The sullen rollers crash upon the shore
  And play their low sonata while the deep
Is roused to anger by the voice of Thor
  Who calls down hail and lightning on its sleep.

The wind in rigging sighs its fantasy
  While clammy mist swirls greyly round with dawn
The starlit ruffles on the dark wide sea
  Tell magic tales of worlds fore'er forlorn.

Nocturne: a silver path of moonlight falls,
And still the half-heard wild sea-music calls.

ON THE ROAD TO BETHLEHEM

Written by Felicity Yorke at the age of 16.

What matter if sleet cuts like sharp-edged stones,
And the ass stumbles, jostled by the noisy crowd,
That kick the dust and grime into one's face
And jar the air with cries, discordant, loud?
They do not know—
These weary men that plod the way and snatch
Present relief in tumult—
They cannot know.

We wondered how the word would be fulfilled:
"And thou Bethlehem
Art not the least among the Princes of Judah
For out of thee shall come the Captain that shall rule my people Israel."
We wondered; and to pass long winter days
We gleaned the Scriptures for some explaining phrase:
Joseph and I who knew the secret!

Then came the Emperor's decree—
We understood!
We're getting near the time and place.
Would we were nearer!
It's thrilling to feel I shall see Him face to face:
My God and my Son!

He is the son of Him I love—
Of him I love more than all else,
Nothing, no-one, hold I dearer
Than my God!

I did not understand how it was to be,
I had forgot "A virgin shall conceive",
I realized not the breadth of His Love,
The plan His Goodness made I did not see.
But now I feel Him near—
This census now is but a further sign,
He's coming, God's Son, God Himself a Child,
And He's mine!
He's theirs as well—
These people travelling the same road
As us, as Him; oh, who can tell
Which of these same will follow Him once more
With harsher, mocking cry,
And gloating watch Him die
For them!
I'll love them, because He loves them,
Because He'll spend His life
Teaching and advising them, comforting and curing them,
Punishing, rewarding them, training and adjuring them,
Giving them Himself, His Love, and getting no return,
Dying for them
And raising Himself as a glorious sign
Of His Godhead!—Tomorrow
He's theirs by His own gift
But today, He's our's, Joseph's and mine!

SAND

Written by Elizabeth Bennett at the age of 16.

I held it in my hand—
It lay there shining in the sun—
A tiny grain of sand. . . .
And as I looked there seemed to be
Not one but countless golden grains
Which stretched as far as eye could see
And further yet and on and on—
A mighty desert at my feet
Lay gleaming in the awful heat.

It was so still that awful waste
That I was awed by its great calm.
But then a wind whirled from the East
And swooped into the passive sand—
They rose as one and filled the air:
The stinging sand was everywhere.

The stinging sand was everywhere
I could not flee but was forced down
And buried under layer on layer
Of shifting sand that fought with me.
But I grew weary of the strife
And seemed to lose my hold on life. . . .
I held it in my hand—
It lay there gleaming in the sun—
A tiny grain of sand.

FOR A FRIEND (killed in action, 1948)

Written by Gloria Benjamin at the age of 16

We could not know
That he, our comrade, born where rain-winds blow,
Who scarcely knew
Another sky than North-anaemic blue,
Would close his eyes
Where neither trees nor meadow-grasses rise,
And die, alone,
In this dead wilderness of sand and stone.

We could not guess
How soon we would be—one machine gun less;
Nor had we planned
This ghastly claimant for a shroud of sand.
The lethal sun
Grinds down on bones the sated vultures shun;
Yet, for a span,
This gleaming little heap was once a man.

For him, we fight,
Till Northern flowers star the Southern night,
And slash the hills
Till every dune is slaked with running rills.
So, while his dreams
Are soft with music from his native streams,
The palms shall keep
A tender watch, above his quiet sleep.

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE POETRY SOCIETY: DONATIONS

Gifts have been received from the following, and are here gratefully acknowledged:—Mrs. Irene Orford, Miss Mabel Parker, Mr. N. L. Robson, Lt.-Col. W. T. Shorthose, D.S.O., Mr. Eden Phillpotts, Miss E. Dobell, Miss G. Morton, Mr. Howard Parsons, Mrs. Margaret Beaumont.

THE POETRY SOCIETY: NEW VICE-PRESIDENTS

At a recent meeting of the General Council two new Vice-Presidents were elected: Bryan Walter Guinness, 2nd Baron Moyne and Canon Adam Fox, Professor of Poetry, Oxford University, 1938-1943.

THE POETRY SOCIETY: ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Poetry Society was held at 33, Portman Square, W.1. on May 24th, 1950.

Apologies for non-attendance from Mrs. E. Van den Bergh, Roy Campbell, Robert Lyle, and E. Guy Pertwee were received.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting which had been printed in the August/September issue of *The Poetry Review* were read, confirmed and signed as correct.

The President's opening speech was a short but brilliant *resumé* of the progress of the Poetry Society during the past year. He maintained that if every member were to aim at bringing in one more member at least, the financial problem of the Society would be well on the way to solution. He referred to the work of the Developments Committee and the leaflet it produced, designed by Mr. Thomas Moult; to the £250 it had allocated for annual advertising; and to the dissemination of the Society's literature to kindred bodies. Representing the Society, the President had discussed liaison with the B.B.C., with the Director of the Home Programmes, who invited the Society to nominate a representative to meet the Home and Light Programme organizers in a consultative capacity. He had also represented the Society at various meetings at the Arts Council. He divulged that the Society's War Damage claim had been settled for about £415, only £25 short of the full claim submitted. He recalled the very successful meeting of the Centre Organizers arranged by Mrs. Adamson and the reading and presentation arranged by Dr. Stopes to mark the resignation of Mr. Galloway Kyle from active service with proper ceremonial. The Auditions, the President declared, remained the Society's brightest spot financially. During the year under review they had continued to make steady progress. Rising costs of paper and printers' wages had compelled *The Poetry Review* to be reduced to 60 pages, "a heavy handicap for the editor who, most would agree, had given the Society a Review of which on the literary side it could feel justly proud". The President referred to the work of the Readings Committee and read a report from its Chairman, Mr. John Carroll. Before closing he also paid tributes to the General Council, the Executive Council, Miss E. D. Bangay who had "worked tirelessly on the special critical service of *The Poetry Review*", to Mr. H. K. Grant the Honorary Librarian, to Mrs. Adamson for her valuable work regarding the Centres; and penultimately and with special emphasis to the Honorary Treasurer, Mr. John Graddon. Lastly, thanking the staff, the President spoke of his genuine regard and affection for them. "We are very fortunate in our staff," he concluded simply.

The Hon. Treasurer read the financial report which had been distributed together with a copy of the balance sheet and formally presented the statement of accounts up to

December, 1949. He reminded members that the previous year he expressed a moderate and qualified optimism which he submitted had been justified by the excess of expenditure over income being reduced from £1,123 15s. 2d. to £423 10s. 7d., this latter figure included arrears of pension amounting to £300 to Mr. Galloway Kyle. Several questions were asked and answered. The President proposed that the meeting approve the accounts for the year ending December, 1949. This was seconded by Mr. A. V. Burbury with an expression of confidence and thanks and carried by a large majority. The Hon. Treasurer paid a personal tribute to the auditors for their help and advice to the Society and moved that the firm of Messrs. Godwin and Taylor be appointed as auditors for the coming year at a fee of 80 guineas. The motion was seconded by Mr. A. V. Burbury and carried.

Dr. Marie Stopes spoke to her motions, copies of which had been distributed. A proposal that the list of Vice Presidents should appear on the inside cover of *The Poetry Review* was discussed and defeated. Dr. Stopes' second motion on "the immediate necessity for a small change in the Constitution" was elaborated to a point at which the Chairman was compelled to point out that no motion could be put unless it had had the requisite 28 days notification; this did not apply to the additions (notably the proposal to add the office of Honorary Secretary to the Constitution) which Dr. Stopes was appending to her original motion and which he would therefore be compelled to rule out of order. Dr. Stopes then left the meeting, and in consequence her third motion "That this Meeting requests the General Council to appoint a Public Relations Officer and to consider carefully the qualifications of Mr. Kyle for appointment to that position" was deemed to have lapsed.

It was agreed to limit the number of members of the General Council to the thirty receiving the highest number of votes. A card vote was taken and the papers were handed to the auditors of the Society for counting and checking. In due course the President announced the result of the election of members to the General Council.

A vote of thanks to the President and Hon. Treasurer for their work on behalf of the Society was moved by Mrs. Adamson and warmly applauded.

A vote of thanks to the Editor was moved by Mr. Thomas Moult.

A tribute to the examiners was paid them by Miss Rene Cohen.

Miss Odette Tchernine called for a vote of thanks to Mr. Carroll and Mr. Charles Doran and the Friday Readings Committee for their work during the year.

ADULT GOLD MEDAL EXAMINATION

In his concluding remarks at the Poetry Society's Adult Gold Medal Examination, held in the Society's Library at 33, Portman Square, W.1., on June 1st., Mr. Clifford Turner said that all the candidates showed a very deep love of poetry through their work, but in a number of cases this led them astray by prompting them to adopt what he felt was a poetry voice and poetry manner. This hides and obscures the nuance of emotion that the poet deals in.

Mr. Turner said that every speaker was sincere, but that sincerity though essential was not enough. He praised them for this quality, but told them they were dealing with an individual's soul, and must put themselves in the background because they were the least important of the two, and the poem should be a revelation of what the poet said and thought and understood.

The successful candidates were Miss Barbara M. Brown of London, S.W.1., and Miss Jean Hosking of Putney.

THE POETRY SOCIETY READINGS

This Wordsworth centenary year finds us still in need of Wordsworth. His plea for the searchlight of simplicity to point a way of communion with the eternal, his contemplative

perception and integrity in a time of doubt and war similar to our own : these things are more than ever needed. It was in this spirit that the Poetry Society paid tribute to his memory at Portman Square on the 21st April when Canon Adam Fox gave a short but devoted address as a preamble to a full range of the master's works distilled by Lord David Cecil from the great West Country and Grasmere decade of 1798 to 1808. The seal was set to the occasion by the moving presentation by Christopher Hassall of the Immortality Ode.

How fitting this quiet homage of a full gathering of poets and poetry lovers was, as a preface to the public memorial service at the Abbey sponsored by the Society on the poet's birthday two days later, when Canon Fox, himself a Vice-President of the Society, lead the crowded congregation in divine worship for the gift of Wordsworth to our heritage of poetry.

These occasions were the keystones of the culminating portrayal, in a series of readings at Portman Square, of the dawn of the romantic movement. The following Friday, Mr. Thomas Foley produced in sensitive fashion a cross section from the works of Coleridge. *Kubla Khan, Christabel* and *The Ancient Mariner* served to remind us of the immeasurable debt Wordsworth owed imaginatively and technically to this stricken giant. In the flight of his vision, his grasp of the supernatural and in his philosophic directive he was the fitting complement of the nature poet and his "onlie begetter". What the world lost in great poetry through his predilection for thought and speech this balanced presentation, splendidly read by Mr. David Holmes, and the Misses Daphne Thompson and Elizabeth Brough, gave us a full conception.

It was also more than seemly that Robert Burns was honoured in true measure after Wordsworth and Coleridge. Preceding Wordsworth in publication by a dozen years it is rarely appreciated in England that Burns was the great herald of romanticism. Wordsworth learnt at the Scotsman's knee the virtues of a simple, glowing diction and sensibility. A debt which he repaid in tribute at the grave of Burns in 1803. On the present occasion Mr. James McKechnie, in inimitable fashion, demonstrated how a crowded English audience could follow the humour and humanity of Burns in his lyrics and ballads by virtue of the onomatopoetic delight of the Lowland tongue. The mightiness of Burns as a social and national force was pinpointed in native fashion by the President of the Burns Club and by Mr. H. K. Grant, the Honorary Librarian to The Poetry Society itself.

The Countess of Birkenhead was in the chair for the Keats and Shelley reading which appropriately crowned this series. She outlined in a fresh, vital fashion the work being done by the Memorial Association for the maintenance of the Keats-Shelley memorial house in Rome and its importance as a place of pilgrimage and international amity. Mr. John Carroll had prepared a finely balanced programme in which the sensuous magic of Keats served as counterpoint to the soaring harmonies of his friend and the beauty of voice of Miss Isabel Dean and Mr. Alan Wheatley gave full orchestration to the music of these loveliest of poets.

It is fitting that The Poetry Society at this time of centenary remembrance should have interwoven the works of these five masters; Wordsworth himself, Coleridge, Burns, Keats and Shelley, for together they are the floodtide and the fullness of wonder.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

CENTRES

THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE POETRY CENTRE

July 8th at 2.45 p.m. *Poems expressing Tranquillity.*
Miss E. D. Bangay, Tilehurst Cottage, Hemel Hempstead Road, Chesham: 287, 362 Bus to Codmore Cross.

No Meetings will be held during August.

THE CAMBRIDGE POETRY CENTRE

Enquiries should be sent to:—Douglas B. Mortlock, Esq., 187 Histon Road, Cambridge.

THE CHELSEA POETRY CIRCLE

(Affiliated to the Poetry Society. Formed 1946)

President; Dame Sybil Thorndike

Vice-President; Miss Margaret Rawlings

Informal readings are held each month in member's homes, and occasional public readings at the National Trust Museum, 3 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, S.W.3. Full particulars from the *Hon. Secretary*, John E. Carroll, 5 Redesdale Street, S.W.3.

THE EALING POETRY CENTRE

Enquiries should be sent to:—Miss Mary Giles, 36 Kitchener Road, High Wycombe, Bucks.

THE GUILDFORD POETRY CENTRE

Details of meetings may be obtained from The Centre Secretary, Miss C. Kearse, 132 Maybury Road, Woking.

THE HAMPSTEAD POETRY CENTRE

The meetings of the Hampstead Poetry Centre will be held on the first and third Thursdays of the month, at 8—9.30 p.m. at 9 Wentworth Mansions, Keats Grove, N.W.3, by invitation of Miss M. H. Huntsman (Hon. Secretary).

THE NORTHERN IRELAND POETRY CENTRE

Enquiries should be sent to:—Mrs. O. Hasluck, 633 Lisburn Road; or Miss H. Haddock, 18 Ashley Gardens, Belfast.

THE NOTTINGHAM POETRY CENTRE

Enquiries should be sent to:—Lake Aske, Esq., 21 Lady Bay Road, West Bridgford.

THE REIGATE POETRY CENTRE

On Thursday, May 18th, the Centre was honoured by a visit from the President, Mr. T. W. Ramsey, F.R.S.L., the first he has paid to the Centre, when he read Cantos Fifteen and Twenty-six of Dante's *Paradiso* in his own translation. "The translation greatly commended itself to his listeners," states the *Surrey Mirror*.

Details of Meetings may be obtained from the Centre Secretary, Mrs. M. A. Hicks, The Alton, Alma Road, Reigate.

THE SOUTHAMPTON POETRY CENTRE

Enquiries should be sent to:—Miss Joy Brider, 9 Archers Road, Southampton.

THE STROUD CENTRE

On Saturday, May 20th, a meeting of the Stroud Poetry Centre, shared by the Poetry Group of the Gloucester Writers' Circle, was held at Steanbridge, Slad.

This was an occasion of special interest when the Stroud Centre was honoured by a visit from Headquarters. Mr. T. H. Foley brought with him three Readers—Miss Elizabeth Brough, P.S.G.M., Miss Daphne Thompson, and Mr. David Holmes. They delighted an audience of sixty people with readings from an admirably selected programme—modern poetry in the first half, and after an interval for tea, mutual introduction, and talk, the programme continued and the listeners found themselves witched away under a Celtic spell, with poems by W. B. Yeats, "A.E.", James Stephens, and Oliver St. John Gogarty.

It is hoped that this meeting will prove to be only the first of others planned by the Stroud Centre to link together Poetry-Lovers scattered up and down the country, and it is felt to be of particular value if such meetings can be further stimulated from time to time by a visit from Headquarters.

The Stroud Centre records with a deep sense of loss, the death of a gifted member, Margaret von Hodenberg. With the consent and collaboration of her family, the Centre has collected, edited and published a small volume of her poems. (Price 3s. 6d. postage 3d.)

At the Annual General Meeting of the Stroud Centre, the resignation of Mr. Edgar Proudman, Chairman, was received with much regret. The vacant chair was filled by the election of Major Cuninghame, and Miss A. Ellerton elected as Hon. Secretary in place of Miss M. Martyn who has done valiant service in this office for four years.

The Stroud Centre welcomes all who are in any way interested in Poetry, and information with regard to membership can be obtained by application to the Hon. Secretary at Steanbridge, Slad, Nr. Stroud.

THE SUSSEX POETRY CENTRE

Enquiries should be sent to:—Mrs. Doris R. Richards, Oak Cottage, Eason's Green, Framfield, Sussex.

Will anyone able and willing to start a Centre in any part of the country please communicate with the Secretary, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1.

POETS' GROUP OF THE POETRY SOCIETY

This Group, dedicated to furthering the work of active Poets within the Society, gathers "to hear each other's work and discuss the spirit and substance of poetry". All interested in attending future meetings are invited to communicate with me at The Well House, Ewell, Surrey.

LEIGH HENRY

THE POETRY SOCIETY'S CRITICAL SERVICE

The Poetry Society has pleasure in announcing the continuance of its Critical Service for Members. Two poems only may be submitted for criticism, for a minimum fee of 5s. The charge for the criticism of each additional poem is 2s. It is particularly requested that all poems submitted should be typed and that a stamped addressed envelope be enclosed.

THE POETRY SOCIETY'S AUDITIONS AND EXAMINATIONS

The Poetry Society has conducted auditions and examinations in the art of verse-speaking for many years, and its success in this valuable cultural activity is attested by the fact that the number of schools and institutions in all parts of England which the Society examines, continually increases.

Junior preliminary examinations are available for the youngest children and these continue through various grades, up to the final test for adult students, for which the Society's gold medal is the final award for success.

General regulations governing these auditions may be obtained on application to The Registrar, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, with whom arrangements can be made for auditions for schools, colleges, or private individuals.

COMPETITIONS

THE PREMIUM COMPETITION

The above bi-monthly competition continues as before with the total entrance fees as prize money which may be won outright by a single competitor or may be divided at the discretion of the Premium Adjudicator. An entrance fee of 2s. 6d. will be charged, and a stamped addressed envelope should be enclosed if a receipt is desired. Competitors must observe the following rules:

1. One poem only may be entered by each competitor.
2. The poem must be typed and no stamped addressed envelope will be required unless a receipt is desired. (See Rule 3.)
3. Competitors must retain copies of their poems, as none can be returned.
4. Entries must be addressed "Premium Competition", *The Poetry Review*, 33 Portman Square, W.1.
5. Each poem must bear the author's name and address.
6. Entrants must be members of the Poetry Society or regular subscribers to *The Poetry Review*.
7. The winner of a full Premium or one who has shared the prize twice will not be eligible for re-entry for twelve months.
8. No previously published poem may be entered.

The closing date for the next Premium Competition will be 15th August, 1950.

THE HOWARD PARSONS' EPIGRAM COMPETITION: 1951

The Poetry Society is empowered by Mr. Howard Parsons, a long-standing member of the Society, to offer the following prizes, endowed by him for an Epigram Competition.

1st prize, 5 guineas; 2nd prize, 2 guineas; 3rd prize, 1 guinea. Entries which should not have been previously published should be marked "Epigram" and should not bear a stamped addressed envelope, as MSS. cannot be returned. They should be addressed to The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, to reach here not later than 1st March, 1951. The Society reserves the right to extend the closing date of the competition should none of the entries reach the required standard.

THE POETRY SOCIETY JUNIOR VERSE COMPETITION

The Poetry Society have pleasure in announcing the next annual Junior Verse Competition. Schools throughout the country are invited to co-operate in submitting the work of their pupils.

The Competition will be divided into two classes:

(*a*) Not more than one poem, previously unpublished, to be submitted by any one competitor, age up to thirteen years last birthday. There will be a book prize inscribed by the Poetry Society.

(*b*) Not more than one poem, previously unpublished, to be submitted by any one competitor, age from fourteen to seventeen years last birthday. There will be a book prize, inscribed by the Poetry Society and four additional prizes of one year's Membership to the Poetry Society.

The poem may be on any subject. Closing date, 30th June, 1951. Entries to be addressed to: The Junior Verse Competition, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1. Entries should bear the names and addresses of competitors and copies should be retained as these cannot be returned.

THE LORD ALFRED DOUGLAS SONNET COMPETITION FOR 1951

The Poetry Society has the pleasure of announcing the fourth Annual Competition in memory of Lord Alfred Douglas for a sonnet upon any subject. One of the two forms adopted by Lord Alfred Douglas in his sonnets, must be used; these are:

For the Octave — 1, 2, 2, 1; 1, 2, 2, 1.

For the Sextet — 3, 4, 5; 3, 4, 5 *or* 3, 4; 3, 4; 3, 4.

The prize of £10 may be divided at the discretion of the adjudicator; the winning poem or poems will be published with the award in *The Poetry Review*. Competitors must retain copies of their poems as these cannot be returned. The sonnets should bear a definite title and not merely marked "Sonnet". Not more than two sonnets may be submitted by each competitor by 30th June, 1951. Address "Sonnet Competition", The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1. Entries should bear names and addresses of competitors. No previously published poem may be entered.

POEMS OF PLACE COMPETITION FOR 1951

Mrs. A. Dorothy Holmes, a Shropshire member of The Poetry Society, offers £10 annually in competition for poems of place. Competitors who must be members of The Poetry Society, may submit not more than two poems, previously unpublished, of not more than 100 lines. All entries should be typewritten and bear the name and address of the author; poems should be addressed to "The Holmes Prize", The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1, not later than 1st April, 1951. The judges may divide the prize money at their discretion, and the winning poem or poems may be published in *The Poetry Review*. Competitors are asked to keep copies of their entries as these cannot be returned.